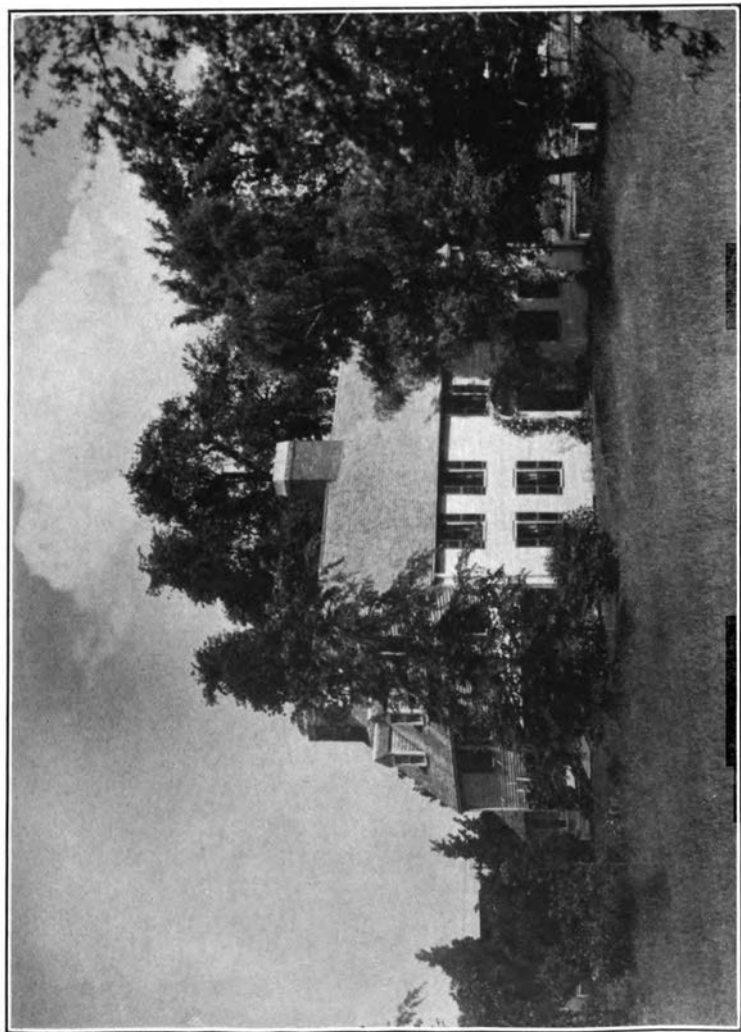


**THE FIRST PARISH**  
**Newbury, Massachusetts**  
**1635 - 1935**



HOME OF REV. THOMAS PARKER AND REV. JAMES NOYES



# THE FIRST PARISH

## Newbury, Massachusetts

### 1635 - 1935

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1935



**NEWS PUBLISHING Co., INC.**  
**PRINTERS**  
**1935**

## PREFACE

The committee for the celebration of the tercentenary of the First Parish, Newbury, felt that its first duty was to awaken in the minds of the younger members of the parish an appreciation of three hundred years of community life and worship, and its second duty, to arrange for the preservation in suitable form of hitherto scattered records and traditions. Both of these purposes are, it is hoped, accomplished in the publication of this volume.

Publication has been made possible through the co-operation of the editors and contributors listed on the title page and of the following guarantors: Caroline L. Colman, Harriot W. Colman, Florence E. Dibble, C. Stanley Harrison, Maria P. Humphreys, William Ilsley, Agnes L. Little, Eliza A. Little, Hallet W. Noyes, Walter R. Noyes, Arthur S. Page, Joseph D. Rolfe, Roland H. Woodwell.

The committee wishes to express its gratitude to Mrs. Annie K. Barnett and to Mr. Gordon Hutchins for making available the manuscript diary of Miss Alice Tucker, and to Miss Agnes L. Little and Mr. Roland H. Woodwell for assistance in details of publication.

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April, 1935.

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## CHAPTER I

1635-1695

In the Puritan colony of Massachusetts, where that experiment in government, referred to by the late General William A. Pew as the Bible Commonwealth, had its inception in the new world, the church, as an instrument of active authority, exercised an influence of such proportions as almost to test the credulity of our present generation, which is unaccustomed to such a close and confining union of spiritual and civil jurisdiction. In Newbury, as everywhere in seventeenth century New England, the church was the centre of community life. Attendance at its services was compulsory; opposition to its doctrines was a matter for court action; money for its maintenance was raised by taxation, and the conduct of its affairs was attended by the same mingling of idealism and selfishness that now appears in the councils of towns, states, and nations. This arose largely from the fact that the parish and the town were the same unit, so that town meetings and town officials handled those matters which are now handled by parish meetings and parish officials and by the proprietors of the meetinghouse.

This Puritan theocracy had its roots in the old world, where opposition to the errors and abuses on the part of the Roman Catholic church resulted in the Protestant Reformation. John Wycliffe in England as early as the reign of Edward III, together with other forerunners of the Reformation on the continent, kindled the spark which a century and a half later was fanned into flame by Martin Luther, and paved the way for an ultimate separation from the old church. In England, the Papal supremacy was cast aside and a reformed church established in the reign of Henry VIII. This church, under Elizabeth, became the Church of England.

With the passing of the Tudors and the accession of the Stuart family came a tendency toward a pro-Catholic school of thought and action within the new church which reached a climax shortly after Charles I ascended the throne in 1625. The apparent sympathy of the monarch with the older faith and the attempt to usurp the civil authority by the extremely high church prelate at Canter-

bury, Archbishop Laud, greatly aroused the suspicions of Parliament and many of the English people. This pro-Catholic attitude on the part of Charles I was one of the causes of the civil war which eventually cast its pall over all England.

But long before civil war actually broke out, many Englishmen, weary of church strife, decided to seek a haven in the new world. In the first fifty years following the settlement at Plymouth, thousands of men and women—not a few from the landed gentry—found their way to that region which lies between Cape Cod and the Piscataqua, and established homes wherein they sought solace from Episcopal oppression and costly foreign conflicts. Among these dissatisfied English emigrants was that particular group from which we of Newbury trace our ancestry and derive our Protestant heritage.

In May, 1634, there arrived in Boston a vessel, the "Mary and John." It was not unlike the other ships that had nosed their way past Noddle's and Thatcher's Islands in Boston Harbor bringing settlers to the new world. It is reasonable to assume that it bore some resemblance to the "Arbella," which brought Winthrop to Salem in 1630; yet it has great meaning for us, for on board were the Rev. Thomas Parker and the Rev. James Noyes, two gentlemen who were to establish at Newbury the First Church whose history we herewith present.

Had these two clergymen and their party elected to remain in Boston, our history might have been quite different. But they did not. Sometime in the summer of 1634 they came north to the settlement at Ipswich, where they spent the winter. The following spring, when they again weighed anchor, they sailed up the river which now bears the name of the sainted Parker and landed on the left bank at a spot now appropriately marked, opposite the property of the Oldtown Country Club. In this immediate vicinity they chose to establish their settlement and selected a spot which we now call the Lower Green.

Happily, the majority, at least, of the names of these early settlers and members of the first church have been preserved, and for the sake of the record, they are herewith given: Henry Short and servants; William Moody, wife and four sons; Anthony Short, Henry Short and wife; Mr. John Spencer, Mr. Nicholas Easton,

wife and son, John; Richard Kent and wife; Stephen Kent and wife; Richard Kent, Junior, James Kent, Mr. Thomas Parker, Mr. John Woodbridge, Mr. James Noyes and wife; Nicholas Noyes, Thomas Brown, Richard Brown, Mr. James Browne and wife; Thomas Coleman, Francis Plummer and wife; Joseph Plummer and Samuel Plummer. "A sufficient company to make a competent town," says Johnson in his *Wonder-working Providence*. The number was greatly increased during the next twelve months, fifteen ships arriving in June and one each in August, November, and December.

The church and parish or town began in the same year, probably 1635. Many years later several men recalled being present at an open air meeting at which the Rev. Thomas Parker preached a sermon on Congregational Church discipline, at the close of which those present elected Mr. Parker as their pastor and Rev. James Noyes as teacher.

In his sermon Mr. Parker quoted from Matthew 18:17, "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." How really prophetic was the text which he used on that memorable occasion! How like an anchor, a haven of safety did the people regard their church in that hour when they faced the future, fraught with dangers, in a wilderness three thousand miles from merry England!

An account of this first sermon is found in a sworn deposition of John Pike, dated March 30, 1669. Mr. Pike stated that he was "present at the gathering of the church at Newbury and . . . did hear our reverend pastor preach a sermon on the 18th Matthew . . . wherein he did hold forth that the power of discipline belonged to the whole church, yt the matter of the church ought to be visible saints joyned or gathered together, that the manner of their joyning together ought to be by covenant, yt the end of it is for the exercisinge and enjoyinge of the ordinances of Christ together.

"He strongly proved his doctrine by many places of the scripture, both in the old and new testament, which sermon, together with the scriptures, did much instruct and confirme us in that waye of church discipline which as I understood he then preached for, name-

ly the congregational waye, some noates of the said sermon, which I then took from his mouth I have here ready to shew, if you please. The sermon being ended the brethren joyned together by express covenant and being joyned they chose their pastor, Mr. Parker who accepted the call and joyned with them according to the covenant aforesaid; and those that afterward joyned to the church consented to the said covenant explicit. The brethren of the church acted in these admissions of ye members, expressinge their voats therein by lifting up the hande and soe continued together lovingly a considerable number of yeares untill other doctrine began to be preached amongst us."

What a glorious privilege to have witnessed that first church service under the oak tree and to have heard Mr. Parker preach that first sermon to his little band of devoted followers, staunch in their loyalty to old England, but determined that out of their sacrifices should come a new order, a democratic plan of religious supervision, a congregational system of guidance!

As defined in Mather's *Magnalia* and in the Cambridge Platform, both pastor and teacher were officers of the church; both preached, and both were empowered to administer censures; the pastor's work was particularly to "attend to exhortation, and therein to administer a word of wisdom," while the teacher was expected to "attend to doctrine, and therein to administer a word of knowledge."

Both Mr. Parker and Mr. Noyes were men of strong character and intellect. Mr. Parker was born in Wiltshire, England, probably June 8, 1595, the only son of Rev. Robert Parker. He was admitted to Magdalen College, Oxford, but when his father was exiled for nonconformity, he went to Dublin and then to Holland, studying at Leyden. He received his master's degree and at the age of twenty-two wrote *Theses de Traductione Peccatoris ad Vitam*, for which he refused to claim authorship because he feared that in writing it he had not so fully aimed at the glory of God as he ought to have done. He returned to England after his father's death, taught in the free school at Newbury, studied "school divinity" and rejected it because of the temptations which he found in it.

It is probable that Mr. Parker, together with James and Nicholas Noyes, was instrumental in organizing the group which came, we presume, largely from Wiltshire, Berkshire, and Gloucestershire to settle

this town. Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia* says of Mr. Parker, "Removing with several devout Christians out of Wiltshire into New England, he was ordained their pastor at a town on his and their account called Newberry, where he lived many years, by his holiness, the humbleness, the charity of his life giving his people a perpetual and most lively commentary on his doctrine. He was a person of most extensive charity; which grain of his temper might contribute unto that largeness in his principles about church government which exposed him unto many temptations amongst his neighbors, who were not so principled."

Mr. Parker had a rather striking combination of qualities. He had the traditional Puritan insistence upon obedience to law. He was described by Nicholas Noyes as the "strictest observer of the Sabbath that ever I saw." With Mr. Noyes, with whom he lived, he kept a fast once a month. He had the Puritan's horror of sin, and during the Indian wars feared that he might, if captured and tortured, be unable to resist the temptation to blasphemy. He believed in the absolute truth of the Bible, and allayed his fears of blasphemy by thinking of Isaiah 51:12, 13 and Romans 8:35, 36. Mr. Parker was a scholar. To him belongs the credit of having established a high intellectual standard in the settlement. He studied Bible prophecy and in 1646 published *The Visions and Prophecies of Daniel Expounded*. He taught a school of about twelve to fourteen students preparing for the ministry and continued to teach Latin, Greek, and Hebrew after becoming blind. One proof of his knowledge of languages is quoted by Dr. Popkin: "There is a report of which I have no written vouchers: That, some ministers being dissatisfied with some of his opinions, came to reason with him on these subjects. They addressed him in English, he replied in Latin; they followed him in Latin, he retired to Greek and Hebrew; they pursued, but in Arabic he stopped them. He then refused to be examined by them." Strictness of life and depth of erudition did not, however, prevent him from having sufficient human sympathy to add his name to an appeal to the county court for clemency toward one of his parishioners who, with her husband, had "ever bin of unblameable conversation never offending in this kind, except in this one particular." He seems to have been respected even by his enemies and to have been loved by great men. "The Lord give me



grace to follow my dear Master as he followed Christ," Samuel Sewall wrote shortly after Mr. Parker's death in 1677, "that I may at last get to heaven whither he has already gone."

Rev. James Noyes, son of the Rev. William Noyes, and cousin and colleague of Rev. Thomas Parker, was born at Choulderton in Wiltshire in 1608. He received much of his education under Mr. Parker and was summoned by him from Brazenose College, Oxford, to assist in the work of teaching the school at Newbury, England. Before coming to New England in 1634 he married Sarah Brown. While Mr. Parker was at Ipswich, Mr. Noyes preached at Mystic, coming from there to Newbury, where he remained as teacher of the church until his untimely death, October 22, 1656. Like Mr. Parker, he was a scholar and published several books, including a catechism. Mr. Parker must have been very fond of him, for he paid a glowing tribute, speaking of him as "a man of rare talents, yet gentle and mild in all his expressions. He was courageous in dangers, and still was apt to believe the best and made fair weather in a storm." He was much honored and esteemed in the country, and his death was much bewailed. Dr. William Allen of Bowdoin says of him, "He was eminently skilled in Greek, and he had read the Fathers and the Schoolmen. His memory was tenacious, his invention, rich, and his judgment, profound. He was considered one of the most eminent men of his day."

During the summer of 1635, the building of the first meeting-house was begun, probably on a site about one hundred rods north of the training green at or near the burying place mentioned in a grant to John Emery, May 18, 1647. A stone marks the supposed site near the homestead of Horace Plummer. This first house of worship was not wholly completed until September or October, 1638. A parsonage was also built by 1637.

The building of the meetinghouse and parsonage led to an important event in Mr. Parker's pastorate, the application of the church to the General Court for support from taxation. It had apparently been the intention of the founders of New England churches that expenses should be met by voluntary contributions, and this system operated successfully in some churches for several decades. But in Newbury a debt of sixty pounds incurred in the building of the first parsonage, occasioned a petition to the General

Court in 1637, the result of which was that the Court ordered that the money to pay the debt should be raised by a tax on personal property and real estate. This was the beginning of the system of compulsory support of religious worship which spread through New England and did not entirely disappear in Massachusetts until 1833.

A similar tax was imposed to pay for completing the meeting-house. On September 4, 1638, the freeholders were ordered by the General Court "that a rate of 28 pounds be made speedily and gathered within one fourteenthnight for the finishing of the meeting-house." The town appointed Mr. Woodman and Edward Rawson to make this rate, the constables to gather it, and Henry Short and Richard Kent to receive this rate and survey the work.

Yet lack of a completed meetinghouse did not prevent the men and women of Newbury from attending service and, indeed, they had little choice in the matter, for the heavy hand of the meticulous theocracy which directed the affairs of church and state in Boston fell upon all the settlements within its jurisdiction—Newbury included. Before the little town was a year old (March, 1636), the General Court had enacted a law requiring "every able bodied man above eighteen years of age to attend meeting on the Lord's Day with their musketts or other pieces fit for service with match powder and bulletts upon paine of 12 pence for every default."

Further, the General Court directed that "no dwelling house shall be built above one-half mile from the meeting house in any new plantation without leave from the court, except mills and farm houses of such as have their dwellings in town."

Differences of opinion over ecclesiastical doctrine appeared in Massachusetts Bay Colony very soon after the settlement of Newbury. This is not surprising considering the fact that the Reformation had set men's minds free from the Roman Catholic faith and the rise of Puritanism in England gave them a still greater sense of religious liberation from the bonds of the Established Church. The colonists were, therefore, left with little more than a simple basis for belief and with a great opportunity for personal differences of opinion which were not slow to come to the surface.

Even before the meetinghouse at Newbury was completed, the General Court, controlled by a small ecclesiastical group in Boston which feared for its power, determined to make its authority felt.

A Synod was held at Newtown (Cambridge) in which eighty persons were condemned for holding erroneous opinions. Afterward, the General Court banished and disarmed many. Among those who felt the displeasure of the Puritan hierarchy for daring to exercise in the new world that independence of thought, the restraint upon which had caused them to leave the old world, were Richard Dummer, John Spencer, and Nicholas Easton of Newbury. Spencer returned to England; Easton settled in Rhode Island, but Dummer braved the storm and stayed in Newbury.

A local issue which aroused much feeling in the parish was the proposal to move the meetinghouse from the Lower Green to a point opposite our present meetinghouse. The natural increase in population and the added number of immigrants who came to town between 1635 and 1642 caused many of the settlers to feel that the settlement around the Lower Green had outgrown itself, and there began a great agitation to move the town farther northward. In fact, a goodly number of the new immigrants and a few of the old settlers left the original settlement and moved to the vicinity of what is known as the Upper Green and formed what the town history calls the "New Towne." Naturally, they did not want to walk three miles to church; so they petitioned the town fathers to build a meetinghouse somewhat nearer their homes. The same argument, however, held for the other group. Then began the dissension that endured for four years, during which innumerable petitions and requests from both parties found their way to the selectmen and the General Court. Finally the selectmen took action, for on January 2, 1646, the following vote was recorded:

"We whose names are in the margint [margin] expressed for the settling of the disturbances that yett remain about the planting and settling the Meeting House, that all men may cheerfully go on to improve their land at the new towne, doe determine that the meeting house shall be placed and sett up at or before the 20th of October next in or upon a knowle of upland by Abraham Toppan's barne within a 6 or 16 road [rod] of this side of the gate posts that are sett up in the highway by the said Abraham Toppan's barne." This site was in the northwest corner of the present burying ground of the First Parish. The old meetinghouse was taken down and moved to that location, or else a new one was built there. Thus the

"New Towners" gained the victory and the meetinghouse disappeared from the Lower Green.

Within a few years another meetinghouse was built, as is indicated by a vote of the selectmen in 1651 that the young men were to sit in the "four backer seats in the Gallery, and in the two lower seats at the west doore. This was the order for seating in the old meeting house." If the "old meeting house" was the one built in 1635 and moved in 1646, as would seem to be indicated by the fact that it was so soon replaced, it was apparently of the type found generally in the early meetinghouses of this region, having a gallery at the rear. It was while this meetinghouse was in use that the first recorded bequest was received by the church—eighteen shillings from the estate of John Osgood of Andover "to Buie a Chushion for the minister to lay his Book Upon."

References to difficulties about seating arrangements suggest that this meetinghouse soon became crowded, and a new one a little south of the old one had been built by 1661, the old one apparently being torn down at that time. The new meetinghouse contained a gallery "at both ends and all along on the west side, with three substantial seats all along both sides and ends." It was this house that was the scene of several dramatic incidents. In 1663 Lydia Wardell of Hampton, a Quaker, came naked—or, according to the constable Henry Jacques, "part naked"—into the meeting house, and was subsequently ordered to be whipped and to pay a fine. In the same year Elizabeth Webster was ordered by the county court to stand at the meetinghouse door from the ringing of the first bell until the beginning of the prayer, wearing a paper on her head reading "For taking a false oath in Court," or to be fined five pounds and disabled from taking an oath; she chose to stand at the door.

A great many difficulties over "seating the meeting" occurred while this meetinghouse was in use. There had been some difficulty in the old house, and a few months after the new one was built the selectmen announced: "For the ordering and setting both of men and weomen in their seats in the new meeting house that there may be no disturbance wee do agree that according to the order made bearing date January 24th 1651 they may enjoy their seats dureing their lives." But the seats were assigned on the basis of social position, and back seats were not as popular as in some mod-

ern churches. Trouble soon began. In 1662 four men pleaded guilty in the court to sitting in others' seats contrary to selectmen's orders. In 1667 Daniel Lunt petitioned to have a seat arranged for his wife and several other women. The selectmen ordered two short seats rebuilt for that purpose, thereby taking a seat previously assigned to Goodwife Randall, who was now given a seat "superior in dignity" on the west side of the meetinghouse. Goodwife Randall had so little liked her former seat that she had usually preferred to sit in the aisle, but she coveted it as soon as it became the property of someone else. She was a person of vigorous temperament and had been in court in 1652 for calling one of her neighbors "base lieing divell, base lieing tode, base lying sow, bas liing jade." She now proceeded to crowd into her former seat and "to climb, ride or stride over, it being four or five feet high, and to force the door upon the proprietors who were in the seat before her." The majesty of the law was invoked, and the Goodwife was "admonished for disorderly carriage in the meeting house." In 1669 John Wolcott and Peter Toppan, admonished for sitting in a seat belonging to others, complained that the selectmen without consulting the town had placed a seat in front of a seat occupied by some who had "paid considerable sums to the building both of the meeting house and Galleries" and in the new seat had placed their own children and relatives. Public sympathy may well have been with the defendants in this case as it apparently was later, when, in 1677, Joshua Richardson, Caleb Richardson, and Edward Ordway were convicted of breaking into the meeting house and breaking a pew and chairs. A petition in their behalf called attention to the fact that the pew which they demolished had been set up without permission from the town, and furthermore that "the major part of the town did so justify the act of pulling down this pew that they gave a general vote that this seat should be reduced to its former station and be a common seat as formerly."

During Mr. Parker's pastorate there was one other occurrence more important even than the increase in the size of the parish and the building of new meetinghouses. That was a controversy between the pastor and a group of church members which attracted attention throughout New England and had a permanent effect upon Congregationalism wherever it now exists derived from New



England sources. This controversy was not over a disputed point in theology. The only matter of doctrine that caused enough trouble to result in court action in Essex County was the heresy of anabaptism, which did not develop to any serious proportions in Newbury. In fact, doctrine did not seem as important to the seventeenth century layman as did church organization. "It is well known," Increase Mather wrote in 1680, "that as to matters of doctrine we agree with other reformed churches; nor was it that, but what concerns worship and discipline, that caused our fathers to come into this wilderness." The controversy at Newbury resulted from the Presbyterianism of Mr. Parker. According to Professor Platner's *The Religious History of New England*, "Some of the Congregationalists of New England tended to form a presbyterial system of church government, and it was an open question for a time whether a few of the churches might not adopt that policy." As the conflict developed at Newbury it attracted wide attention. If Mr. Parker's tendencies toward presbyterianism had been less vigorously resisted, pastors with similar inclinations in other churches might well have been encouraged to take further steps in the same direction which would have tended to break down the Congregational form of church government in New England and consequently in those parts of the New World to which New England Congregationalism has gone with its special contributions to Protestantism and the Christian faith.

It is hard to tell when there first began to be a feeling of dissatisfaction with the presbyterian tendencies of Mr. Parker and Mr. Noyes. Nicholas Noyes wrote of the latter: "Notwithstanding his principles, as to discipline, were something differing from many of the brethern, there was such a condescension on both sides, that peace and order was not interrupted." There are other indications that difference of opinion existed, but there was no real outbreak until several years after the death of Mr. Noyes. From 1656, the year in which Mr. Noyes died, Mr. Parker apparently carried on the work of the church without assistance until 1663, when Rev. John Woodbridge, a nephew of Mr. Parker, returned to Newbury and began to act as assistant to his uncle. Just how this came about is not clear, and does not seem to have been wholly understood even by those most concerned.

John Woodbridge, like Mr. Parker and Mr. Noyes, was born in Wiltshire, the son of a minister. The date of his birth was probably about 1613. He studied at Oxford until the requirement of the oath of conformity, and then continued his studies privately. He came to New England and took lands in Newbury at the time of the founding of the town, but returned to England upon the death of his father. In 1642 he was again in New England and had married the daughter of Governor Thomas Dudley. Perhaps following the advice of his father-in-law, who wrote to him "Now in all these respects I conceive you to be better fitten for the ministry, or teaching a school, than for husbandry," he was ordained teacher at the church at Andover, September 16, 1644. He returned to England and remained there until 1663, coming then to Newbury, where he assisted his uncle Mr. Parker until the arrival of Mr. Richardson in 1673. He remained the rest of his life in Newbury, being successful in husbandry in spite of Governor Dudley's opinion. In 1685 he appears in the town records as one of the largest rate-payers and is given the title of "esquire." He served as magistrate and justice of the peace. A few days after his death in 1695, Sewall wrote: "Mr. Woodbridge was a good man, and a constant attender upon God in his publick worship on the Sabbath-day, though he himself preached not." Cotton Mather described him as being "wonderfully composed, patient, and pleasant." When told on one occasion of the loss of many of his cattle, his only comment was: "What a mercy it is, that this is the first time that ever I met with such a disaster."

It is hard to tell what there was about such a man as Mr. Woodbridge that should cause so much trouble in the church and parish. Perhaps it was merely that those opposed to Mr. Parker's presbyterianism were aroused by the fear that Mr. Woodbridge would succeed his uncle and carry on the same policies. Whatever the reason, there was trouble. The first incident was the reduction of Mr. Parker's salary to sixty pounds in 1664, which, however, was raised to the former amount of eighty pounds the next year. In 1665 on the question of whether Mr. Woodbridge should preach for one year, there were four affirmative votes and thirty-one blanks. It seems as if this might have been taken as a hint of the prevailing sentiment, but the friends of Mr. Woodbridge and Mr. Parker



**REV. JOHN WOODBRIDGE**  
**Assistant Pastor 1663-1673**



claimed that the voters had misunderstood the question. On November 1, 1667, it was voted that Mr. Woodbridge was to have sixty pounds a year, that his rates for the past two years should be paid, and that those who were delinquent about payment should be summoned before the commissioners. This seems to indicate that some parishioners were showing their sentiments by refusing to pay toward the preacher's support, a method of protest not unknown in modern times. In March, 1669, a vote was taken on whether Mr. Woodbridge's preaching was to be discontinued, those so desiring to indicate that fact by speaking, while those who desired its continuance were to keep silent. Apparently the usual reluctance to speak in meeting was of assistance to the existing order, as Mr. Woodbridge continued to preach.

The next outbreak was at a town (or parish) meeting, and the leader of the opposition was Mr. Edward Woodman, a man of means and importance who had previously served as town moderator and as a member of the first school committee. Mr. Woodman spoke emphatically about Mr. Woodbridge's position in the church, charging that he had been brought in by "craft & subtilty and so kept in, notwithstanding he was voated out twice," that Mr. Parker was an "apostate and backslider from the truth" and that he wanted more power than the Pope and was the cause of all the trouble. Apparently Captain Gerrish made a reply in which he alluded to Mr. Woodman's gray hairs, to which the latter responded that his gray hairs would stand wherever Captain Gerrish's bald pate would. As a result of his plain speaking Mr. Woodman was summoned before the County Court on complaint of Richard Kent, Henry Short, and Anthony Somerby. Among the evidence presented by the defense was a statement of Mr. Parker's that "for the time to come I am Resolved Nothing shall be brought in to the church but it shall be brought first to mee; and if I approve of it, it shall be brought in; if I do not approve of it, it shall not be brout to the church." Mr. Woodman was fined and appealed. A dissenting opinion was given by Samuel Symonds and William Hathorne, who thought that a majority of the church evidently preferred the congregational way of church government, that it was a burden to them that they did not have it as other churches did, and as they did at first, and that all concerned, especially Mr. Woodman, should "blame themselves"



(make public confession) at some suitable church meeting.

This settlement of the case pleased nobody, and a month later Richard Kent, Henry Short, Anthony Somerby, William Gerrish, Richard Dole, and Tristram Coffin presented a petition to the General Court complaining that the dissenting opinion of Symonds and Hathorne contained "false accusations insinuated against divers amongst us" and that it intimated that the people in the church could not have the congregational way of church government. The petitioners asserted that, on the contrary, Mr. Parker had previously been criticized for bringing too trivial matters before the church. They also defended the method of voting by speech and silence which had been used in the vote on Mr. Woodbridge's continuance.

In November of that year an ecclesiastical council reported on the controversy. While the acts of Mr. Woodman could not be approved, Mr. Parker was advised to use "all winning means," forbearing his opponents in love meanwhile. Perhaps Mr. Parker attempted this, but if so he was unsuccessful, for three months later John Webster read publicly before the church a complaint that Mr. Parker had brought unjust charges against his opponents, who claimed to be the major part of the church. On March 30, 1670, Webster was convicted for reading a libel against Mr. Parker, claiming it to be in the name of the major part of the church, which he did not prove at the hearing; he was admonished, fined ten shillings, and required to pay for one meal for the jury.

Between Webster's reading of the paper on March 19 and his buying a meal for the jury March 30 both parties had taken extreme measures. On March 16 a communication was sent to Mr. Parker suspending him from his church offices such as administering seals and sacraments and acting in matters of church government, but adding that as a gifted brother, he might preach for the edification of the church if he pleased. Later that same day Mr. Parker was notified that the church had chosen two elders, Mr. Richard Dummer and Mr. Edward Woodman, who were to be ordained one week from that day. Mr. Parker's reply was, as might be expected, a refusal to concur in the "erecting of any new form of government," followed by a suggestion that the matter be referred to an ecclesiastical council and a hint at recourse to law. To this Mr. Woodman replied with a reminder that it was "far from the rule of Christian

love so to practice one against another before court and county," and suggested, somewhat inconsistently, referring the case to the General Court.

Mr. Parker's next move was excommunication on March 19 of "those brethren who have so deeply violated the communion of Christ's church." Excommunication had no terrors for the anti-presbyterian party, and on March 23, Mr. Parker wrote in a somewhat more persuasive tone appealing against their appointment of ruling elders, especially Mr. Woodman, who "stands publicly charged with several scandals."

On April 19 an ex-parte council met. Mr. Woodman and his party presented a request that they might be heard without prejudice, claiming that they were holding to the substance of what had been established by the General Court for church government—"that which the churches have practiced in general with a joint consent as far as we know"—and reaffirming that they "will not turn presbyterians." This council achieved what seemed impossible in drawing up an agreement which was temporarily accepted by both parties and which contained the following covenant and articles of accommodation:

"We whose names are underwritten do hereby testify and declare that we do fully consent and agree unto the covenant and agreement contracted and made betwixt Mr. Parker, our reverend pastor, and Mr. Woodman and the brethren that are with him, that is to say that the synod book called the platform of discipline with the other four articles shall be our rule in the church of Newbury for our practice in all administrations, because we take it to be an explanation of the scriptures, and a rule agreed upon as a means to avoid all future divisions and contentions, we mean the agreement made before and by the help of the messengers of nine churches, contained under five heads, signed under the hand of the moderator and scribe of the assembly, in witness whereunto and in witness whereof we the assembly set our hands.

"Articles of accommodation betwixt Mr. Parker of Newbury, Mr. Woodman and the brethren with him mutually agreed upon before the council at Newbury, April twenty-second, 1670.

"First, that the platform of discipline, established by the general court, practiced by the churches of New England, shall be the

rule of standard of the congregational way according to which the church of Newbury do resolve both pastor and brethren to act in all church administrations.

"Second, that all matters of controversy being considerable and of moment, not issued before the pastor or elders to mutual satisfaction of parties concerned, shall be brought to the church according to the said platform.

"Third, that they, who are propounded for admission into the church shall stand some considerable time, at least a fortnight, and public warning given on the Lord's day, when they are to be admitted.

"Fourth, that no difference shall be made in admission of members into the church upon account of their difference of judgment as to the congregational way pro or con, the persons being orthodox and of good conversation.

"Fifth, that, when the providence of God shall give an opportunity of regular call of any other officer, it shall be attended by the church according to what is laid down in the said platform of discipline, chapter the eighth."

However, in less than a year the disputants were again before the County Court. Mr. Parker had been accused of breaking the covenant. Rival church meetings had been held by Mr. Parker and Mr. Woodman. At one meeting called by Mr. Parker, Mr. Woodman and his friends had made so much noise that business could not be transacted. Mr. Woodman and others had refused to attend communion. The decision of the Court was against Mr. Woodman and forty others of his party, who were required to pay fines of various amounts.

Two days after the County Court decision, the General Court ordered several churches to send elders and messengers to inquire into the state of affairs at Newbury and to give advice. At this time excitement was running so high that a report was circulating that Mr. Parker had written to friends in England who had presented the case to the Archbishop of Canterbury and that a bishop might be sent to New England. Finally in May, 1672, the General Court issued an order based on the report of the elders and messengers appointed the previous year, condemning the action of Mr. Woodman and his followers in suspending the pastor and choosing

elders, and condemning Mr. Parker and his party in suspending Mr. Woodman and others. The Court then added the following advice: (1) voting should be by show of hands; (2) Mr. Woodman should obey the fourth commandment and attend public worship on the Lord's Day; (3) Mr. Woodbridge should not "impose himself or his ministry (however otherwise desirable) upon this church"; (4) ecclesiastical offenses should not be brought into civil courts until churches had previously been consulted. To this was added a tactful suggestion that "considering the great age and weakness of reverend Mr. Parker and thereby his unfitness to manage church discipline," a ruling elder or two should be chosen. The order concluded with an appeal for humility, forgiveness, and "such acts of reformation and love as is suitable to the grace of true repentance."

The only other reference to this controversy to be found in any existing records is the appointment by the General Court in October of a committee to call both parties together and persuade them to attend a council "in love and Christian submission one to another." Whether the disputants became more charitable toward each other or were merely worn out by their struggles, hostilities ceased, and a young Harvard graduate named John Richardson began to assist Mr. Parker in the work of the ministry.

Rev. John Richardson was born in Boston in 1647. He was a Tutor (or Resident Fellow) at Harvard before coming to Newbury, which seems to have been his first pastorate, where he remained until his death April 27, 1696. He was apparently the right man for the Newbury pulpit during a difficult period.

His sermons, if one may judge by *The Necessity of a Well Experienced Souldiery, or A Christian Commonwealth Ought to Be Well Instructed and Experienced in the Military Art*, and a sermon on Ephesians 1:5 preached at Harvard College Chapel in 1670, were logical and reasonable rather than brilliant and striking. He accepted the Puritan theology; he preached in his Harvard Chapel sermon that those who are not made children of God by the free grace of adoption are children of the Devil and will receive death, the wages of sin. In his sermon on *The Necessity of a Well Experienced Souldiery* he showed a modern contempt for dependence upon the miraculous when he said, "God works now by men and means, not

by miracles. Neither can it be expected that the walls of Rome as the walls of Jericho shall fall with the sound of a Ram's horn." A rational attitude of this sort may well have had a steadying effect upon a parish just recovering from internal dissension and passing through the disturbance of the witchcraft trials. Mr. Richardson's soundness of judgment seems to have been appreciated by his parishioners; in 1687 he was appointed with the selectmen to "procure an able schoolmaster," and in 1694 was a member of a committee to treat with Mr. Christopher Toppan in regard to a call to preach in the new or western part of the town, now known as West Newbury. In 1690 he offered to give up five pounds of his salary to help establish a second parish in the town.

Although Mr. Richardson was not ordained until 1675, it was apparently assumed soon after his arrival that he would be permanently settled in the parish, as a committee was appointed January 31, 1672-3 to build a parsonage "of the same dimensions . . . as Nath. Clark's is, with the addition of a porch." After the death of Mr. Parker, Mr. Richardson was given the choice of an addition of twenty pounds to his salary or two contributions as long as he should carry on the whole work of the ministry.

During the pastorate of Mr. Richardson the more remote portions of the parish were being settled. In 1680 the selectmen petitioned the County Court that "considering that the town is much increased, & by reason of trading begun to be sett up among us, like to be enlarged more, & the town being much scattered, whereby many want some sober refreshment on the Sabbath dayes, upon the motion of Mrs. Anne White we desire to recommend her as a meet person to the Court, that if they see fitt she may be licensed to keep a house of publicke entertainment." At this time there were of course preaching services morning and afternoon. Samuel Sewall preached at the afternoon service April 4, 1675, and recorded in his diary: "Being afraid to look on the glass, ignorantly and unwillingly I stood two hours and a half." The parish was finally divided early in 1695.

At the same time that the business of dividing the parish was being carried on, Mr. Richardson was evidently ill beyond hope of recovery. The town voted January 1, 1694-5, "Also as Long as the old towne shall be necessitated to procure another minister by rea-

son of Mr. Richardson's sickness, this part of the Towne heere proposed to bee sett off shall pay theyr equall proportion with us to Mr. Richardson. Also if Mr. Richardson should leave Mrs. Richardson a widow, that they also shall pay theyr part with us in the hundred pounds that the towne is obliged to pay to her." Mr. Richardson died three months later, and September 28, 1696 Samuel Sewall wrote, "Mr. Richardson is dead and Mr. Christopher Toppan, a young Newbury Scholar, is ordained in his stead."

Thus came the end of the seventeenth century theocracy in Newbury. The division of the parish meant that the First Parish and its church would no longer contain all the religious and intellectual life of the town. In Newbury, like other New England towns, forces were already at work which were weakening the position of the established church. The new charter secured from William of Orange by Increase Mather had less exclusive privileges for the churches of the standing order than had been contained in the old charter. It was in 1696 that Mather, then president of Harvard, proclaimed in the College Chapel: "It is the judgment of very learned men, that, in the glorious times promised to the church on earth, America will be Hell." It is always hard for those in authority to see progress in the passing of the old order, and perhaps only the young men who were dreamers could see in 1696 that the church of the next two and a half centuries would find a place in the life of the community not by dependence upon privilege and outward authority but by spiritual leadership and service.



## CHAPTER II

1696-1804

At the opening of this period, sixty-seven years after the settlement of Newbury by fearless and hardy English pioneers, the children of these immigrants were the men of affairs in church and town. They were reared in this new country without the advantages of an old world background. In fact the intellectual life of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was then at its lowest ebb, because no indigenous culture had yet sprung up to replace that of the immigrants, many of whom were educated in European universities. The mental life of the men was confined almost wholly to religion and politics, but because of existing conditions there was a strong unifying force among them.

The last decade of the seventeenth century and the first few decades of the eighteenth constituted a period of extreme sterility in art and literature. Not a poem was written in this period which would be of interest now, except to an antiquarian. The musical life of the colonists consisted mainly of instrumental music in private houses and taverns. The first pipe organ was installed in King's Chapel in 1713, a gift of Thomas Brattle, after it had been refused by the Brattle Street Church, Boston.

Congregational singing throughout New England is described as incredibly bad.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, singing was so popular in New England that Cotton Mather complained "that the minds of the country people were being corrupted by foolish songs and ballads, which the peddlars were carrying to all parts of the colony." As an antidote he suggested that hymns should be distributed among the people.

The efforts of those who desired to improve the congregational singing in the Sunday services were looked upon with grave concern by the more conservative element, who declared "that singing by note would grieve good men, exasperate them and cause them to be disorderly, that it was popish, that it might, horrible thought, intro-

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<sup>1</sup> March 22, 1731, William Hsley and Joseph Morse were chosen "to tune the psalms in the meetinghouse, in time of Public Worship, and take their turn in the work that it might be done with more ease and cheerfulness."



duce musical instruments; and that the notes were blasphemous." In time the progressives won, and lining out hymns was displaced by Watts' hymn book. The bass viol and flute were introduced at a later date to accompany the singing.

It is interesting to note that the first instruction book in music was published in Newbury in 1712.

The incumbent in the First Parish in Newbury during the first half of this period was Rev. Christopher Toppan, a physician as well as a minister. He has been the only native of Newbury to have this honor. His father, Dr. Peter Toppan (sometimes spelled Tappan), built the house on High Street, a little below the corner of Marlborough Street, now owned by Mrs. Agnes Adams.

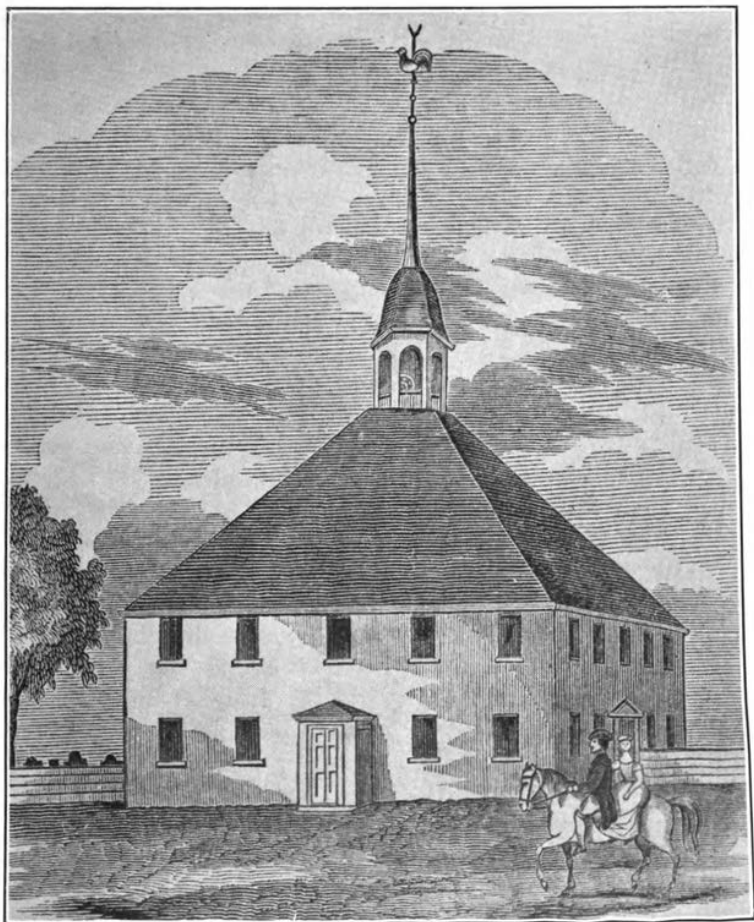
It was customary for the clergy to prepare boys for college, and it is quite possible that Rev. John Richardson, who was pastor of the First Church in Newbury from 1675 to 1696, fitted Christopher Toppan for Harvard.

On his journeys to college, he saw the old mile stones in Newbury, one of which we pass on Green Street near the stone wall of Mrs. Susan Morse, and a second one not far from the Four Rock swimming hole. This highway was the main post road to Boston. He completed his course at Harvard in 1691 and was called to Newbury shortly thereafter.

On February 21, 1694, the town voted to give Mr. John Clark £20 in money and £50 in grain a year to carry on the work of the ministry in this parish. He declined and Mr. Toppan was invited to preach in "ye new town." He refused to be settled, but expressed a desire to help in the ministry for one year. The town voted to give Mr. Toppan £40 and four contributions of farm produce a year.

It is recorded that on September 9, 1696, Christopher Toppan was ordained pastor of the church in Newbury by messengers of five churches, Ipswich, Wenham, Rowley, Bradford and Haverhill. Two of the messengers were justices: Nathaniel Saltonstall and Thomas Wade. Four other justices were present: Robert Pike, Daniel Peirce, Dudley Bradstreet, Simon Wainwright.

Dr. Toppan married Sarah Angier of Cambridge in 1698 and Elizabeth Dummer in 1739. For more than twenty years his home was on Floyd's Lane. Doubtless his dwelling was on land which is



MEETING-HOUSE 1700-1806



still owned by this parish. Later he bought a house on the corner of High and Allen Streets situated on land now the property of Miss Sarah E. Mulliken.

It is interesting to note that Christopher Toppan felt that the Indians should have convenient lands in their possession, as they were the first settlers. It is probable that his interest in the Indians may have been aroused by Judge Samuel Sewall, who in 1699 was made commissioner of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Indians. Judge Sewall resided in Boston but was a frequent visitor in Newbury. In his diary in May, 1700, he wrote of visiting his sick father in Newbury and of Mr. Toppan's coming to pray with his father. Later in the month he mentioned the funeral sermon preached for his father by Dr. Toppan.

The first covenant of this church on record was made September 28, 1698. It is as follows: "We doe now in the Presence of God and this assembly, give up ourselves unto God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. And doe now professedly Covenant with this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in an Everlasting Covenant never to be broken, that we will be for Him, serve and obey Him, all our dayes. We doe also now give up ourselves to this church of Christ, to walk with them in a due submission to and attendance upon, all orders and ordinances of the Gospel; promising that by the help of the Spirit, our Conversation shall be agreeable to this our profession (2 Cor. 8, 5)."

One of the outstanding events in Dr. Toppan's pastorate was the building of the new meetinghouse, which lasted for more than a century. On July 5, 1698, the town voted to build a new meetinghouse and chose the worshipful Col. Daniel Peirce, Capt. Thomas Noyes, and Sergeant Stephen Jaques as a committee to have charge of it. Sergeant Stephen Jaques was instructed to build a house 60 feet in length, 50 feet in breadth and 20 feet in height. On April 23, 1700, it was voted that "Stephen Jaques shall forthwith hang a bell in the new turret."

In the following September it was voted that there should be a standing table made in the new meetinghouse, also that the house be arranged for seats, as the old one was, excepting ten feet on three sides be reserved for pews and aisles. It was voted "to build a pew for ye minister's wife next ye pulpit stayers," that "Col. Daniel

Peirce Esq. should have ye first choice for a pew and Col. Thomas Noyes ye next choice of a pew."

It seems that floor space was granted for pews without definite plan. As pews multiplied, the floor space between pews was apparently a series of blind alleys. Some years later it is evident that the seats and pews were arranged so as to have an aisle straight from the door to the communion table.

The authenticity of the following description of this house of worship is doubtless correct, as it was given by Dr. Popkin, a later clergyman of this parish, who received it from old members of his parish, who had worshipped in this meetinghouse, before it was altered.

"Before the pulpit and Deacons' seats was a large pew containing a table, where sat the chief of the fathers. The young people sat in the galleries, and the children on a seat in the alley fixed to the outside of the pews. The roof was constructed with four gable ends or projections, one each side, each containing a large window, which gave light to the upper galleries. The turret was on the center. The space within was open to the roof, where was visible a plenty of timbers with great needles and little needles<sup>2</sup> pointing downward which served at once for strength and ornament. There were many ornaments of antique sculpture and wainscot. It was a stately building in its day."<sup>3</sup>

Our church has an ancient pewter christening basin which doubtless was used by Dr. Toppan. The earliest communion set, of which we have any knowledge, was also of pewter. When the church later secured a silver communion set the discarded pewter set was sent to a struggling church in the Middle West. Deacon Edward Perkins, not many years before his death in 1921, went on his own initiative in search of the pewter set. He found a tankard and a few beakers, but the woman in whose possession they were refused to give them up.

The silver communion set includes two tankards, two beakers four and one half inches high and six slightly smaller beakers. One of the larger beakers has the inscription "Ex dono Enoch Coffin"

<sup>2</sup> Wooden pins used to fasten the timbers together.

<sup>3</sup> Deacon Joseph Little, grandfather of the writer, attended services in this meetinghouse when a small boy. He said that Sergeant Stephen Jaques (who has many descendants here and elsewhere) decorated the interior of the meetinghouse with hand carving.

(1696-1728). The smaller beakers are identified by the hall mark I. N. as the work of John Noyes of Boston (1674-1749). There are four communion plates. One pair has been in the possession of the church nearly one hundred years. The other two are the gift of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Chase in memory of Mrs. Chase's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Thurlow.

In 1702 the farmers of Newbury, near Newbury Falls, and inhabitants of Rowley living on the northwest side of "Rye Plains Bridge" built a meetinghouse near the dividing line between the two towns, and soon invited Rev. Moses Hale to the work of the ministry there. The church was not organized until three or four years later. These citizens were released from obligation to support the gospel elsewhere. Hon. Nathaniel Byfield of Boston, for whom the parish was named, gave a bell weighing 226 pounds.

Another separation from the parent church occurred in 1726 when the Third Church in Newbury, later called the First Religious Society in Newburyport, was organized. These two separations were apparently effected without the discord which attended the dispersions into other denominations at a later time.

One important characteristic of this period was the "great awakening" of religious life through revivals. There were many itinerant preachers of whom Whitefield was the chief. His visit to Newburyport occurred September 10, 1740. The influence of these evangelists awakened a desire among the people for a less stereotyped religion. The ascendancy of the old established church was shaken, and the people won, to a considerable extent, the right to such a religious life as seemed best for themselves.

In Newbury the revolt against the clergy took the form of a movement to withdraw from the parent church, to form separate denominations, and to cease paying taxes for the support of the established church. The Quakers and Anabaptists were the first to win this religious freedom. As a result of these dissensions, Dr. Toppan's later years were much disturbed, although he is described as a faithful pastor, and a man of talent, energy and decision. During his pastorate five hundred and eighty-one persons became members of the church.

Dr. John S. Popkin quoted tradition when he wrote, "as a physician and surgeon Dr. Toppan was much employed, for which he took no pay except for medicine."

Nevertheless, an opposition manifested itself which attempted to depose him from his office. His opponents called a council "which decided it would not be blameworthy if they should seek more wholesome food for their souls and put themselves under the watch of a shepherd in whom they could confide."

A few weeks later friends of Dr. Toppan called a council, which reversed the above decision, fully sustained the pastor, and advised the recreant brethren to return to the fold. A long and bitter struggle ensued in which Dr. Toppan strenuously resisted the dissenters, terming their proceedings "irregular and disorderly."

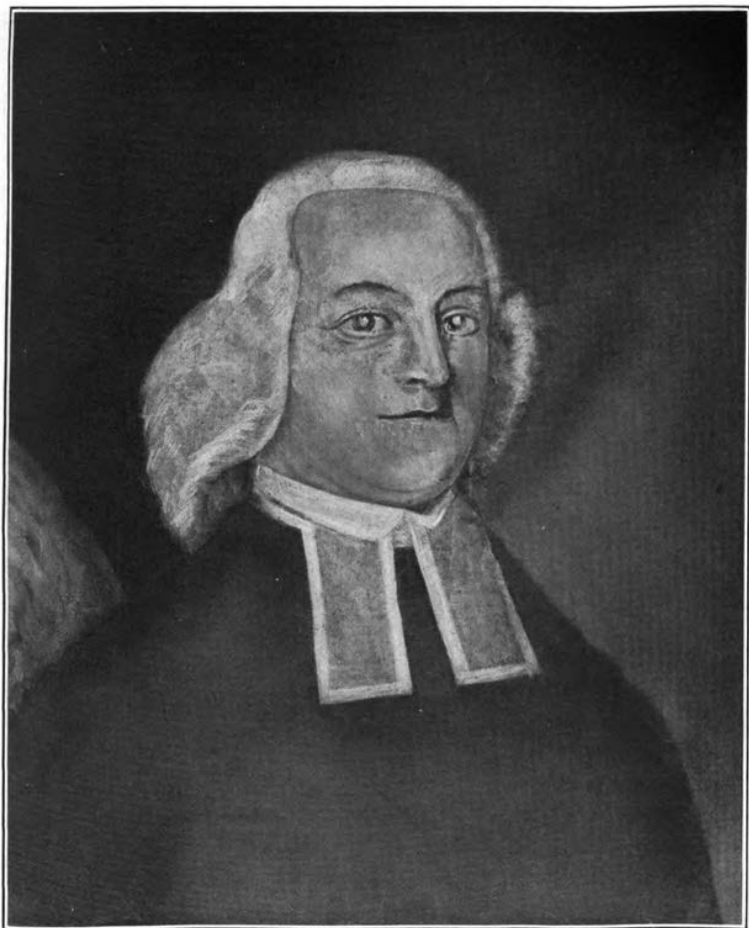
On January 3, 1746, nineteen persons who had formerly withdrawn from the First Parish began to worship in a small building on High Street below Federal Street. This group formed the nucleus of the First Presbyterian Church.

Dr. Toppan in his old age was very superstitious and eccentric, and seems to have had a number of encounters with the Devil. It is possible that the witchcraft delusion, which was at its height during his college days, may have been a contributory factor in his strange malady. Dr. Increase Mather, president of Harvard during Dr. Toppan's college days, and his son Cotton, although very able men of affairs in the colony, were both leaders in the witchcraft persecution. From correspondence between Dr. Cotton Mather and Dr. Toppan, to which John Greenleaf Whittier refers in his poem "The Double-Headed Snake of Newbury," it is very evident that both men were extremely superstitious. Doubtless this influence and the unhappy situation among his church members contributed to Dr. Toppan's mental breakdown.

The Rev. John Tucker, who came to Newbury to assist Rev. Christopher Toppan, was born in Amesbury, September 20, 1719, and graduated from Harvard in 1741. Dr. Tucker was called to be associate pastor July 16, 1745, although many influential men in the parish vigorously opposed him, as he was an Arminian<sup>4</sup> in his theological views. Dr. Tucker, after giving the matter serious consideration and consulting the clergy of neighboring towns, accepted the

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<sup>4</sup> The leader of the Arminians was James Arminius, of Leyden (1560-1609). He taught conditional election and reprobation in opposition to absolute predestination. None but believers could partake of universal redemption. In order to exercise true faith, man must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, but he believed there was a possibility of relapse and death in sin.



REV. JOHN TUCKER, PASTOR 1745-1792





call. On the day of his ordination, November 20, 1745, a strong protest was sent to the ordaining council, but it was not heeded.

The service at Dr. Tucker's ordination was as follows:

Singing of Psalm.

Prayer by Rev. William Johnson of Fourth Church, Newbury (now the Second in West Newbury).

Sermon by Rev. Payne Wingate, Amesbury.

Charge to the People, Rev. Caleb Cushing, Salisbury.

Right Hand of Fellowship, Rev. Joseph Lowell of Third Church, Newburyport (now the First Religious Society of Newburyport.)

Closing Prayer, Rev. Thomas Barnard, Second Church, Newbury (now the First in West Newbury.)

Rev. Christopher Toppan died July 23, 1747, and the Rev. John Tucker thereafter assumed full charge of the parish.

Cultural conditions in the colony had been improving during the first half of the eighteenth century. Many men through privateering, speculation in land, and commercial ventures had become rich, and were desiring and attaining a higher standard of living than at the beginning of Dr. Toppan's pastorate. That the demand for reading was by no means confined to cultivated circles, is indicated by the publishing of almanacs<sup>5</sup> which were almost magazines in themselves. These were eagerly read by the common people. Skill in music<sup>6</sup> and art were being acquired by professional artists and those who could afford such avocations.

In the middle decades of the eighteenth century the position of the established Congregational Church in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was constantly attacked by dissenting members who wished to form other denominations.

The local community was sharply divided over the religious tenets of George Whitefield. The two factions, the New Lights, who followed Whitefield, and the Legalists, sent petitions and counter petitions to the General Court. The former prayed for "liberty to support the public worship as they pleased and not to be taxed else-

<sup>5</sup> In New England the *Farmer's Almanac* and in Pennsylvania *Poor Richard's Almanac* were very popular.

<sup>6</sup> June 13, 1761, Voted that the church use Mr. Tate's and Mr. Brady's Psalms together with Dr. Watts' Hymns.

Nov. 12, 1761, Voted that a pew be built in ye meeting house for ye singers.

where," while the latter strenuously opposed the grant of this privilege.

Many withdrew from the First Church and formed the Presbyterian Church of which Rev. Jonathan Parsons<sup>7</sup> was pastor. These Presbyterians were obliged to contribute to the support of the First Church, much against their will, until in 1770 they obtained partial relief. In 1780 the first state constitution secured a large degree of religious liberty.

The French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War almost filled the fifty years of Dr. Tucker's pastorate. It is written of him that "during the Revolution he bore with his people the privations and trials of this tremendous struggle." He endured all the fluctuations of paper money of that period. At one time he found it necessary to use a wheel-barrow to carry home his salary! Regardless of their own privations, the people of this parish, on February 6, 1775, sent £46 for purchase of provisions for the suffering inhabitants of Boston.

An article written fifty years ago by Miss Mary Toppan Little states that "theologically Dr. Tucker was not a Trinitarian, but in spirit lived a great doctrine, and with all the warmth of a true believer preached 'Christ and Him Crucified.' In all these trials and disaffections the Pastor was found equal to the occasion. He shrank from no responsibility appertaining to his office. Every emergency was met with firmness and decision characteristic of his ability. He moved on his way in undisturbed serenity, illustrating by his daily living, the religion which he taught." Because of theological differences, only sixty-seven persons became members of the church during Dr. Tucker's pastorate.

In 1786 a new covenant was adopted by the vote of the church and used until 1858. It read:

### PROFESSION AND COVENANT

"You profess a serious and firm belief of the Christian Religion as contained in the Sacred Scriptures; and heartily repenting as you hope of all your sins, you do now, in the presence of God and of this church, devote and give yourself up to Him, through our Lord Jesus

<sup>7</sup> In the library of the Historical Society of Old Newbury there is a publication by Dr. Tucker giving a most scathing reply to the Rev. Jonathan Parsons on this subject.

Christ, resolving, by His help, to conform your life, for the future, to the holy rules of the Gospel.

"You do now give up yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of his people, in the Covenant of Grace, believing in, and relying upon Him, as your Prophet, Priest, and King.

"You profess your submission to the laws of Christ's kingdom, and do now enter into covenant with this His church; engaging by divine grace to walk in communion therewith, and attend with them on the ordinances of the Gospel, while your opportunities here shall be continued to you.

"Do you thus promise, devote, and give up yourself?"

There was also a "Half-Way Covenant" in use, which was assented to by non-communicants who wished to have their children baptized. Its origin is unknown and it was discontinued when Dr. Leonard Withington became pastor.

In 1749 the parish gave Dr. Tucker a long lease of the land situated at the corner of East High and Hanover Streets and voted £500 "old tenor" for him to build a house. For many years this house, now occupied by Mr. Harold Jellison and family, was known as the "Tucker house."

Here lived Dr. and Mrs. Tucker with a large family of daughters and sons. "Too much cannot be said of the high character of this family; neither can the refining influence continually flowing into the community from this house be measured."

From a journal kept by one of the daughters, Alice (generally called Elsie), one can imagine the atmosphere of the home life. On September 15, 1788, she wrote, "Afternoon very jovial and lively with my sisters, laughed immoderately. There is nothing like the glee of a Family Circle where all is harmony and undisguised freedom."

May 9, 1789, "Just at dusk the sisters assembled in the keeping room and my father spent the evening reading to us. When he is disposed to entertain us in this way, we are all attention."

Miss Elsie wrote of the apprehension of her mother when her brother Benjamin went to sea, but said that her father was calm and resigned at all times, and that he had "learned his passions to be obedient to his commands." A serious illness of Dr. Tucker's caused his daughter to write in her journal, "Call it not vanity, if I extoll the merits of a kind and an indulgent parent, whose life has been so

uniformly good, but call it by the gentle name of gratitude and affection."

On October 9, 1789, Dr. Tucker preached a sermon on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, which Miss Elsie refers to as follows: "Very affecting, our whole family was dissolved in tears—many of the congregation wept."

It is evident that on account of the large family and the duty of keeping open house, as is customary with clergymen, Mrs. Tucker and her daughters led a busy life. On June 25, 1789, Miss Elsie wrote, "Distaff and spindle take so much time, that there is no time for reading, fine sewing or gossiping." In a later entry she said, "Up to my ears in work. I want my wheel to go without my assistance. I wish all the [spinning] wheels were burnt."

It was the custom, for everyone who could to attend meeting on Sunday. A great majority went on foot. If circumstances permitted, the women rode horseback, sometimes singly or on a pillion. When the chaise was introduced, as a more comfortable means of transportation, the old people and little children were considered fortunate indeed to have this conveyance.

On November 29, 1789, Miss Tucker wrote of this unusual incident. "Went to meeting. When I entered our Pew I found it occupied by a large sheep, but I gave him such a blow as to make him soon scamper off, and did not expect to see him again, but when the sermon was almost done this Fleecy Gentleman made his appearance once more and gave some disturbance by running up and down the alleys, till one of the Parishioners put a stop to his boldness by seizing him by the Horns and carrying him out of the house."

Miss Tucker made numerous calls throughout the parish, sometimes with one of her parents, but more often alone. It is interesting to know that many places where she went are still occupied by the same families. Some of the entries in her diary are as follows:—

"Called with Mother at Mrs. David Little's, spent a very pleasant afternoon."

"Called at Nicholas Lunt's. Conversation on the badness of the time. Aunt Lois Lunt wishes half the people were at the Ohio<sup>8</sup> and the other half in jail."

"Went to see Mr. Silas Little's Lady. She has one child, a daughter, named for herself. She lives prettily enough. He works sometimes in the farming way and preaches occasionally."

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<sup>8</sup> The Western frontier at that period.

"Funeral of Richard Adams a very valuable Man, a kind parent and a benevolent Friend."

"Called at Henry Rolfe's on Rolfe's Lane. A long and solitary Lane leads to his Habitation."

"Called at Mrs. Hale's on Gravel Hill, on way back from Mrs. Hsley's at Oldtown. A very pious circle."

"Rode to sister Stickney's in a chaise."

"Town meeting Day. Mr. Longfellow attired for occasion in scarlet coat and waistcoat and mounted on a very handsome horse."

"Went to the Misses Hsley's for tea. Treated with a glass of elderberry syrup as soon as I arrived. This is a very agreeable cordial. Just as we were sitting down to the tea table to regale ourselves with Cake and a large Cherry Pye, a couple of wild impudent sailors entered the room, seized the Pye and ran off with it; one of the females roused with resentment pursued the Rascal and returned in Triumph with the Pye in her Hand."<sup>9</sup>

"Spent Sunday evening at Richard Little's. He very talkative on farming."

"Called at David Dole's at Oldtown and went up on the great hill with several women."

"Went to Pearson's Mills."

"Went to see a whale some fisherman brought into Oldtown River. I stood on his jaw bone."

It is very apparent that Miss Tucker enjoyed people; consequently her indifference at the visit of Gen. Washington on October 30, 1789, is quite surprising. She did not go to the celebration in Newburyport "feeling that it would be inferior to the one in Boston." She continued, "The Great Man, the Monarch of the Earth has just passed along escorted by his own Train and one or two Troops of Horse, his arrival proclaimed by ringing of Bells and the firing of Cannon." It would seem that Miss Tucker was "more interested in the monarch of the sea than the 'Monarch of the Earth'."

Dr. Tucker "exchanged pulpits" with many ministers in the surrounding towns. It was customary on such an occasion, for the visiting clergyman to arrive on Saturday night and return to his home on Monday.

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<sup>9</sup> The Misses Hsley at this time conducted a tavern at the Hsley homestead, where Miss Elizabeth H. Hsley now resides.

On April 5, 1789, Miss Tucker wrote of Parson Spring's lecture, "He aims much at moving the Passions and is well calculated to inspire Persons with terror."

Other entries are—

June 7, 1789, "Parson Little Preached. He took tea with us and spent the evening."

July 7, 1789, "Seven ministers to dine."

July 24, 1789, "Parson Noble called; took a Rye or two."

Sept. 21, 1789, "Parson Barnard and Lady took tea."

Feb. 15, 1790, "Mr. Pearson of Cambridge, professor of languages, to tea."

On February 28, 1763, Dummer Academy was opened with Samuel Moody of York, Maine, as Master. He was a rather frequent visitor at Dr. Tucker's, but was not a favorite with Miss Elsie. On December 3, 1788, she wrote that the "vociferous Master Moody" called and commented that she thought it considerate of him not to marry!

On June 23, 1790, "We had the Trustees of Dummer Academy to spend the afternoon and drink tea."

Dr. Tucker's sermons must have been well received, as there is a long list of them which he preached on special occasions. The most outstanding is a "Discourse delivered at the chapel of the Harvard College in New England Sept. 27, 1778, at the lecture founded by the Hon. Paul Dudley Esq."

It is interesting to get a glimpse of Dr. Tucker's contacts outside of his parish. He went to Boston occasionally and, according to Miss Elsie's diary, attended Harvard Commencement in 1789. His daughter also wrote of her father's having breakfast at the home of United States Senator Tristram Dalton, when President Washington was the guest of honor. Dr. and Mrs. Tucker also dined with Nathaniel Tracy. Although the political power of the clergy had declined in the ninety-six years since Dr. Toppan was ordained pastor, it is evident that the ministers still had great social prestige.

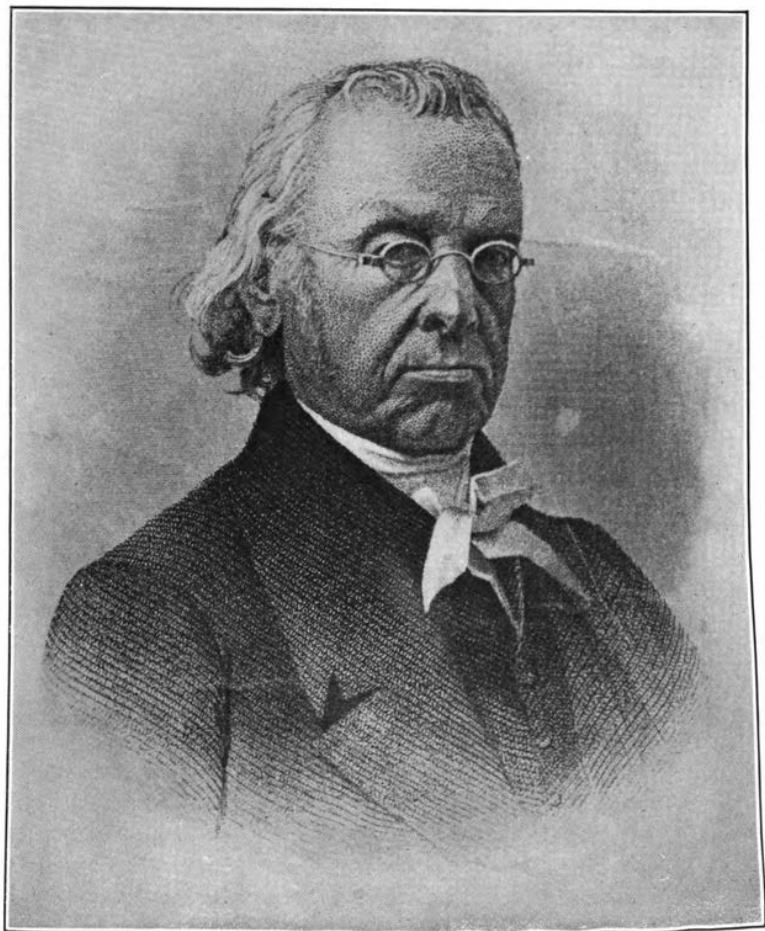
John Quincy Adams (later President of the United States) studied law as a young man with Theophilus Parsons in Newburyport. Mr. Adams in his journal mentioned that he attended meeting at the First Church in Newbury at least seven times and was very favorably impressed with Dr. Tucker's ability.

Since 1696 the struggling settlement of Newbury had become stabilized, and cultural conditions had greatly improved in Massachusetts Bay Colony, which had recently become one of the leading states of the new republic.

Following Dr. Tucker's death on March 22, 1792, the First Church in Newbury had no permanent minister for four years. Rev. Abraham Moor was finally settled on March 23, 1796. He was born in Londonderry, N. H., in 1769, and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1789. It is said of him that "he was a faithful minister, reserved in conversation, but of a fruitful mind in the work of the ministry. He was certainly a man of genius as well as goodness." He died in Newbury at the early age of thirty-three. Eight persons were received into the church during his brief ministry.







REV. JOHN S. POPKIN, PASTOR 1804-1815



## CHAPTER III

1804-1858

Mankind are the actors, and may be studied in the smaller affairs of a parish, as well as in the greater transactions of an empire.

—John Snelling Popkin.

In the line of succession, the eighth minister to be settled over The First Church in Newbury was the Rev. John Snelling Popkin. At this time he was thirty-three years of age, having been born in Boston June 19, 1771.

His name and ancestors came to this country from Wales, by the way of Ireland. Oliver Wendell Holmes in one of his Harvard poems, calls it an "explosive name." His father served in the American Revolution and gained the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Mr. Popkin, as a child, gave evidence of unusual promise. At six he studied Latin, which he mastered to such a degree that soon he was able to construct Latin sentences. His studies included the Bible, and when visitors were present he was often called to answer questions.

At twelve he entered the Boston Latin School. Afterward, his father having bought a farm, the boy left school to help in the work, but as the father realized his son was destined to be a scholar, he re-entered him at the school.

At seventeen he entered Harvard College and graduated as valedictorian, easily the first scholar of his class.

In 1795 he was appointed Greek Tutor in Harvard, and as it was his intention "to consecrate his life to the Christian ministry," he studied theology at the same time.

In 1799 Mr. Popkin was ordained pastor of the Federal Street Society, Boston. The Society was composed of highly intellectual and socially prominent people, and Mr. Popkin was well appreciated, but notwithstanding, he felt himself misplaced and preaching to a people who knew more than he did. This opinion was not shared by the Society, but Mr. Popkin, who was of a sensitive nervous

organization and inclined to melancholia, became broken in health and after three years' settlement requested a dismissal.

Mr. Popkin preached in Newbury for the first time in March, 1804, and from June became the stated supply. His installation took place September 19, 1804. The Rev. John Pierce of Brookline preached the installation sermon. He spoke of the "prevailing inattention to the means of religious knowledge and improvement . . . . of the increasing neglect of public worship" and continued, "They read with avidity the news of the day; they enter with zeal into political discussions; they anxiously make provisions for the temporal comfort of themselves and families. Yet with what heedless unconcern do they regard 'the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation!'"

One of Mr. Popkin's most famous sermons was preached in Newbury June 10, 1804, six months after his settlement, to the First Congregational Society of Newburyport. In 1805 it was printed under the title "An attempt to recommend Justice, Charity, and Unanimity in Matters of Religion." In this discourse Mr. Popkin took for his text "Be of the same mind one toward another" and began, "Discerning men have often observed, that a principal cause of the differences and disputes of mankind is, that they do not understand one another; sometimes not even themselves, or their subject. And a great cause of this misunderstanding is, that the will operates more than they are aware of, often more than reason." Mr. Popkin continued, "Amidst the variety of faculties, education, habits, examples, and situation, it cannot be expected that we should all be of exactly the same opinions. But under the moral discipline of the Gospel, in some diversity of opinion, we may preserve an equal fairness, candor, and friendliness of disposition and of conduct." Mr. Popkin added, "The most difficult points cannot be the most essential."

This sermon may have been the determining factor in extending a call to Mr. Popkin to become the minister of the First Church in Newbury, for four days later the church and parish concurred in inviting the "Rev. John S. Popkin to settle with us in the work of the Gospel Ministry."

His letter of acceptance is as follows: "This is a very important and interesting connexion, a connexion which implies the most

sincere and serious friendship and I am happy in the prospect that in case of a settlement, this sentiment will strengthen, unite and animate us in the pursuit of the great end of life; we appear now to have a strong union and attachment. Let us pray and endeavor that it may continue and increase. Let us consider a Christian establishment not only as a present convenience and satisfaction but as designed to prepare us for a world of harmony love and worship."

Cornelius Conway Felton, one time President of Harvard and biographer of Mr. Popkin, describes the parish at this time as a "rural but very intelligent society," and Judge White wrote "excepting a number of respectable families and several professional gentlemen from Newburyport the society was composed principally of substantial farmers, with a few mechanics and sea-faring men, intermixed, but generally a very intelligent and well-informed people. He could not I believe, have found a congregation of people better suited to his habits and turn of mind, or more disposed to a just appreciation of his worth. Assured as he soon was, of their entire confidence and affection, he felt no restraint among them for the peculiarities of temperament which he was so conscious of possessing, but enjoyed the utmost freedom in his social and parochial visits."

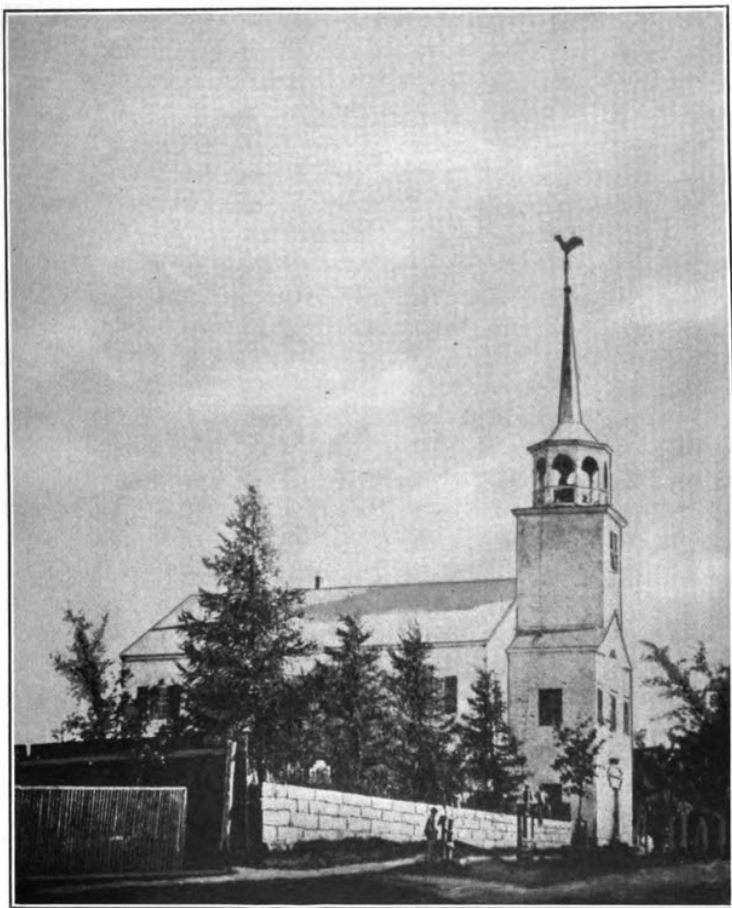
Judge White also stated that Mr. Popkin's "whole appearance in the pulpit was prepossessing. His fine person, clear, manly voice, natural, simple, yet dignified and impressive manner, attracted attention at once, while his fervid sincerity, tender affectionate sympathy, and earnest interest in his subject and in his hearers, fixed their attention and added greatly to the effect of what he delivered."

A story told by Dr. Withington well illustrates Mr. Popkin's own estimate of the intelligence of the parish. A minister once asked Mr. Popkin how long it took him to prepare his sermons. Mr. Popkin replied, "Sometimes a week, sometimes a fortnight, and sometimes three months." "Three months!" was the astonished reply, "why I can prepare a sermon at any time in ten minutes." "Very likely," said Mr. Popkin, "but remember I preach to people of sense."

Mr. Popkin's salary was fixed at four hundred and fifty dollars annually in addition to a "comfortable quantity of wood yearly" and the use of a designated portion of the parish lands. It was also voted "That the Parish will provide him a comfortable house when he shall request it, and continue to do so during his ministry, in addition to his salary already voted." In compliance with this vote, a considerable addition was made to the house built by Henry Sewall, previous to 1678, situated at the corner of High and Parker Streets. Whereas the Sewall house faced Parker Street, the addition faced High Street, and the land extended some distance on Parker Street, and as far as the Coffin House on High Street. Mr. Popkin never married; his sister was mistress of the manse. President Felton in his sketch of Mr. Popkin again quotes Dr. Withington, this time relating an incident heard from a parishioner which illustrates Mr. Popkin's ready retort. Dr. Spring called on him one day and found his room in some confusion, and said, "Why, Brother, don't you get a wife to put these things in order?" Mr. Popkin replied, "The reason is, Doctor, I am too much your disciple; I have too much impartial benevolence to narrow down my affection to one."

James Russell Lowell, a one-time pupil, wrote of Dr. Popkin: "He was a natural celibate, as incapable of matrimony as a solitary palm-tree . . . . A thoroughly single man, single-minded, single-hearted, buttoning over his single heart, a single-breasted surtout."

November 9, 1805, "The parish voted to build the New Meeting-House" but because of delay in receiving the timber, work was not begun immediately, and on May 4, 1806, Mr. Popkin preached for "the last time of assembling in the Old Meeting-House." On this occasion he took for his text "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Mr. Popkin said, "Religion is in itself the greatest good of man; his real, his superior, his spiritual life. To exercise the best affections, toward the best objects, and for the best ends, must be esteemed by every one, who can think reasonably, the highest kind of happiness" . . . . "The church" is called "the pillar and ground" of the truth, the means of preserving and publishing it in the world. Mr. Popkin continued, "This Town and this Church were of the first settlements of our state. The town was incorporated in 1635. About this time, it appears the Church was gathered, the tenth in the Colony."



MEETING-HOUSE 1806-1868





Mr. Popkin further stated, "This building in which we are now worshipping for the last time was finished in the autumn of 1700. In those early times, the whole town, including this adjacent Port, constituted one parish; and it was a very large congregation, and contained a numerous church. The time has been, when these mouldering walls, when those upper, dark and vacant galleries, contained throngs of attentive hearers. But the progress of society, and the increase of population caused the separation of the town, and a diminution in numbers followed and this old Church became the 'parent stock' of nine religious societies."

While the new meetinghouse was building, the First Religious Society and St. Paul's, each of Newburyport, invited the parish to use their respective churches as a place of worship. These friendly offers were much appreciated.

Just one hundred thirty-six days after the last service was held in the old meetinghouse, the new meetinghouse was dedicated, Wednesday, September 17, 1806. Mr. Popkin took for the text of his sermon "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." He said, "In entering a building, designed for the meeting of a Christian assembly, it is not unsuitable to introduce their stated worship with the language, in which angels announced the advent of Christ."

Mr. Popkin, in applying his discourse to the occasion, said, "The Sanctuary of public worship is the principal place of administering the Gospel. This truth does not so much require proof, as recommendation. The visible Church and the Congregation of the people, regularly assembling on the solemn day distinguished by the resurrection of our Lord, are the principal means, under providence and grace of preserving in the world the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, of the Mediator, and even of 'the living and true God.' Without the institutions and ordinances of the Gospel, such is the wayward, forward, downward propensity of Mankind, they would soon live as without God in the world; without any rule or motive but the impulses of inordinate passions; without any restraint but what dire necessity or oppressive force might impose." Mr. Popkin continued, "We have great reason to be thankful to God and to bless his name, in entering into this new sanctuary . . . . Unconcerned spectators who compare this house with others more spacious

and stately, can hardly conceive the magnitude and value of this work in our sight. This week completes two years, since you settled a minister, and you now have erected a house of worship. Truly ye have not been weary in well-doing . . . . .

"We may look on this house as a monument, on which is expressed in strong characters: 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' . . . . . In your walks and in your works, from your hills and from your plains, when you see this 'joy' of the parish, conspicuous and 'beautiful for situation,' let it remind you of the great goodness of that providence, which has guided and animated you to this object. Let the spire direct your thoughts upwards; and may the language of your hearts be, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.' Let the figure of that bird, which checked the defection of the strong and fervent spirit of Peter, admonish you to 'watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

"The motto of the bell is, 'Let Us Love as Brethern.' When the cheerful sound enters your ears, let this divine voice sink into your hearts, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethern to dwell together in unity.'

"At these solemn times, and in this solemn place, let no vain thoughts, nor irreverent behavior disturb our serious duties. And at no other times, may this temple, dedicated to religion, be profaned by indecent levity, by careless abuse, by secular business, by contending passions."

From an account of the dedication of the new meetinghouse published in the Newburyport Herald, we infer the training of singers had progressed rapidly since Mr. Popkin's installation, for at that time no mention was made of music, but here the Herald stated, "The exercises commenced with an Anthem prepared for the occasion," and continued, "the music selected was excellent, and was prepared in a manner which added much to the other exercises."

The meetinghouse was 61 feet long by 51 wide; there was a centre aisle and two side aisles, its pews were square, broad and spacious, furnished with doors which buttoned. The wall pews were considered the most desirable and were raised one step from the floor.

The pews were sold for \$7,577 and became the property of the several owners, who were expected to paint and furnish them.

The pulpit was reached by a flight of stairs, behind which hung a rich, red, brocaded silk curtain. The galleries stretched along three sides of the meetinghouse. The singers' gallery was at the back, directly opposite the pulpit.

That the public behavior of its young people was a question of moment as early as 1806, the year the new meetinghouse was built, is evinced, for at the "Annual Meeting of the Town of Newbury, May 1st 1806 Voted and Ordered that If any person shall throw any stone brick snowball dirt or other substance which would expose any person to danger on any of the highways streets or lanes in this Town such person shall forfeit and pay a sum not exceeding eighty cents nor less than ten cents.

"Voted and ordered that if any person shall play foot ball cricket or any other play or game with a bal or bals in any of the high ways streets or lanes in this Town such person being more than seven years of age Shall forfeit and pay a sum not Exceeding one dollar nor less than twenty cents and if any person shall clime behind any Chaises or Other carriages in this Town without leave from the owner or driver thereof such person Shall forfeit and pay twenty cents."

Another By-Law passed at this meeting was that anyone who "wantonly injures or defaces any fence or other buildings any sign post or sign by cutting scratching or daubing the same with Paint or other Matter or wontonly cut or injure any tree standing on the street or highways in this town or aid or abet or advise the Commission of any of the aforesaid Every such person shall forfeit and pay a sum not exceeding two dollars nor less than twenty-five cents."

During Mr. Popkin's ministry the leading national event, which made a deep impress on the life of the First Parish, was the War of 1812. The United States Acts of Embargo destroyed all commerce, tied up shipping, threw out of employment sailors, sail makers, shipwrights and workers in rope walks.

Although agriculture was the chief occupation in the parish, ship-building had been an industry since its first settlement. Ships of small tonnage were built on the River Parker, and according to John J. Currier, there were in 1727 at least twenty-five or thirty ship yards on the west bank of the Merrimac River between Colonel Daniel Peirce's farm and Bartlett's Cove.

At a town meeting held "Monday the twenty-second day of August at three of the Clock, in the afternoon 1808" the following resolutions were adopted:

"Our commerce is annihilated. Our fisheries are rendered of little or no value, or advantage to us, the business upon which a numerous class of our Citizens depended for their subsistence is destroyed—our ships are decaying at the wharfs and are become a useless, and expensive burthen to the owners—merchandise collected at great expense for exportation is perishing in the hands of the merchants—we are deprived of the accustomed markets for the surplus produce of our farms—our seamen are driven from their country and forced into foreign employ to gain a livelihood. The embargo would do no possible good to anyone."

Mr. Popkin was so aroused and his opposition to the war so determined, that he wrote several articles for political journals, with strong conviction but not aggressively.

Although the War of 1812 was so immensely unpopular throughout New England, almost to the point of secession, the idea of "my country right or wrong" prevailed, and in response to its military call, many men from Newbury enlisted and served with valor.

February 13, 1815, news arrived in Newbury that a treaty of peace had been made.

April 13, 1815, on the "Day of National Thanksgiving for Peace," Mr. Popkin preached a spirited and eloquent discourse in which he said, "We are not giving thanks for anything we have gained; but simply for the blessing of peace."

Just to illustrate how similar are our thoughts of today I quote again from this sermon, "We very naturally think our own times and our own affairs the most interesting and important. But really I think our own times, the period of the last twenty years or more, the most extraordinary that have passed in the late thousand years; and the conclusion not less extraordinary than the progress."

September 27, 1815, Dr. Popkin informed the church that he had been invited to the office of Professor in Harvard College and that it would be agreeable to him to accept "if he were regularly dismissed from pastoral relation." The church and parish voted to

call a Mutual Council to consider the subject and to accept its decision.

The Council met October 5, 1815. It was composed of the Pastor and Delegate from the Fourth Church in Newbury, the Church in Byfield, the First Church in Newburyport, and the Church in Hampton Falls. Silas Little, Esq., made a proposition to the Council, in behalf of the church and parish, to this effect: that the Council dismiss Dr. Popkin from his pastoral duties, but still retain his pastoral relation to the church, if it should not be found incompatible with the duties of the office he is called to fill.

The Council "after serious and careful deliberation" unanimously voted "that the Rev. Dr. Popkin be advised to accept the office, to which he has been elected by the Corporation of Harvard College, still to retain his Pastoral relation to the Church, but releasing the Church and Parish from all demands of salary in future."

Three days later Dr. Popkin preached a farewell discourse in which he said, "Let me exhort you, and be ye exhorted, to cherish a filial and constant affection and attachement to this Ancient Church, founded in the first years of our settlements in this land, and the parent stock of ten or twelve Congregations. I pray you, consider her interests as your interests; the interest of religion as the highest and greatest interest of man; the only good 'which endureth unto everlasting life' . . . Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. Frequent and unnecessary absence is a great fault; a great neglect in itself; and it is a sore grief and discouragement to a preacher. 'Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' Shun contention, study mutual concession and accommodation.

"This advice may seem needless, and perhaps unkind, after we have lived so long together in peace and good will, and after the late acts of honorable charity. But such advice is never unsuitable to human nature. I have often said, that contention and self-will are among the sins, which most easily beset us in this nature and this world. It is an object, which I have sought with particular care and desire, that you might be drawn 'and knit together in love, and might be of one accord, of one mind.' By the divine blessing, we have in a good degree been at peace among ourselves, and with others, and I hope it may be perpetual."

For a little more than eleven years the parish came under the influence of this profound scholar, this kindly, gentle, Christian, and how did they respond? With respect, and with affection, but the material evidence is that the church did not grow under his ministration. As was the custom of the day, the minister united with the church he was to serve, but in addition to himself and brother, only sixteen joined during his incumbency. This can be accounted for in several ways—from his earliest years his life was spent in study, and his associates were students; he had practically no other social contacts. His knowledge and conception of life were wholly intellectual; his sermons were scholarly; his style was graceful and oftentimes solemn. He quoted long passages from the Bible with the same spontaneity as he uttered his own thoughts. He studied the Old Testament in the original Hebrew and the New in Greek, and was as familiar with its context as only a painstaking student could be.

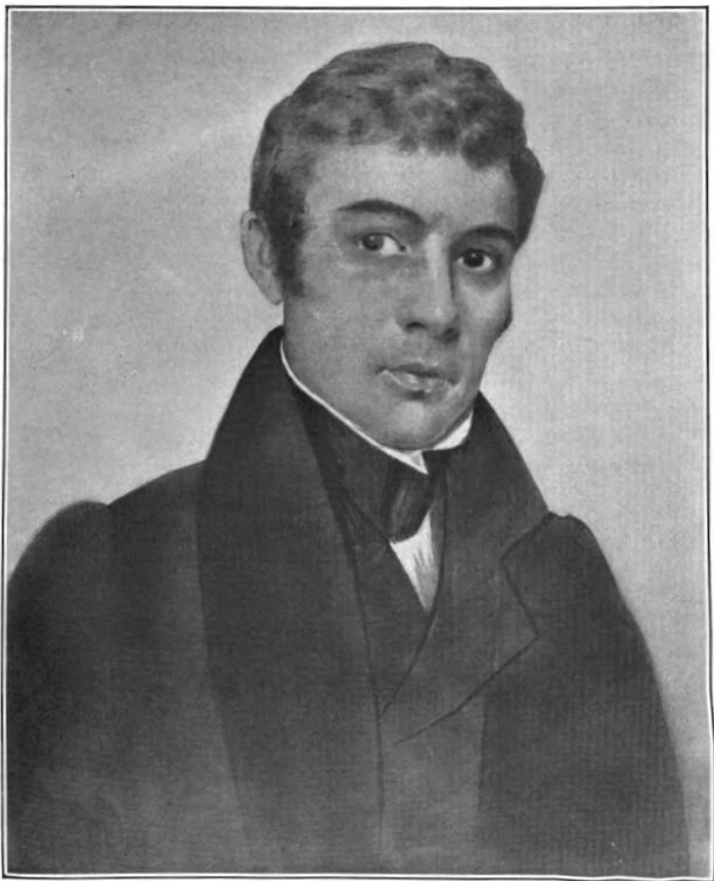
Mr. Popkin was asked one day if he were a Hopkinsian, which was the form of theology taught by a New England divine of his time, and he answered, no, he was a Popkinsian. This reply is not to be taken lightly, but literally; he desired no interpreter, but to receive knowledge and inspiration directly from the Word of God.

On one occasion Mr. Popkin preached on both sides of a controversial question, quoting authority for each view point. He then left it with his hearers to decide, and “Who *shall* decide when doctors disagree?”

Mr. Popkin never pictured life as a battle between good and evil, where the knowledge to choose aright is taught by “precept upon precept.”

In the last year of Mr. Popkin’s pastorate in Newbury, Harvard conferred upon him the degree of doctor of divinity, and today he is remembered in the First Parish as a distinguished scholar who resigned to become Greek Professor at Harvard University.

In the Newburyport Herald, dated November 5, 1816, we read:—“Ordination. The First Parish in Newbury, has for upwards of a century been blessed by a succession of able, eloquent, pious and learned Clergymen—several spent the whole term of their lives among this people . . . the pulpit became vacant; but happily it did not long remain so. Mr. Leonard Withington, a young theolo-



**REV. LEONARD WITHINGTON**  
**Pastor and Pastor Emeritus 1816-1885**





gian was soon introduced to them, who had the singular felicity of uniting all hearts in speaking his praises—erudite without affectation, pious without austerity, and liberal without any mixture of heterodoxy; and who after a suitable probationary time spent among them, they unanimously called to be their pastor; and on Thursday last, the solemn and affecting rites of ordination were observed before a crowded and gratified auditory."

Who was this Leonard Withington? He was born in Dorchester, now a part of Boston, the year George Washington was inaugurated President of the United States, when Benjamin Franklin was still alive, John James Audubon a boy, and the French Revolution just begun.

His father was esteemed as a man of sound judgment, and his mother, a woman of rare intellect and social charm who intuitively infused into her children her passion for reading.

At the age of fifteen, Leonard Withington entered the publishing house of Thomas and Andrews, Newbury Street, Boston, where he was brought into daily contact with men of learning and culture; for his leisure hours, he had access to a varied and extensive library. His employment was of a literary character; he set up the type for Locke's *Essay on the Understanding*, "which marked an epoch in the history of philosophy;" and of Darwin's *Laws of Organic Life*, "a partial anticipation of his famous grandson's views on evolution."

The theatre opened a new world to him; he saw the celebrated actors of the day and many of Shakespeare's plays. He attended political meetings where he heard Otis, Selfridge, Gore, and other notables.

His natural gifts in conjunction with his occupation inspired in him the desire to edit a review or magazine to be illustrated by his brother, an engraver. This ambition led him to realize the need of a higher education; so he went to Phillips Academy, Andover, to prepare for college. The rules of the Academy were strict, and religion the constant theme. A deep impress was made on his mind; he learned to consider "his own happiness of little importance compared with the vast universe of God."

Through the influence of Dr. Codman, his pastor, he changed his purpose of going to Harvard and entered Yale in the autumn of 1811. A serious illness lost him nearly the whole of his Junior

year, and the brilliant scholastic honors, so generally predicted, rolled from his grasp, but he learned through disappointment, sickness and sorrow the nobler lessons of life.

Mr. Withington once wrote, "It was not my original intention to be a preacher, I had no love for the office . . . . It appeared to me to require a narrow round of formal virtues, to which I was reluctant to submit . . . . But circumstances bore me away. I found my friends passionately determined that I should be a preacher. I seemed to see the finger of providence pointing in that direction."

After graduating from college, Leonard Withington studied divinity with President Dwight of Yale, Dr. Codman of Dorchester, and at Andover Theological Seminary. He was licensed to preach October, 1815. The Sunday before Thanksgiving he preached in Newbury First Parish. The following winter he preached near Boston. Both parishes gave him a call—one generously endowed, large and with a salary three times that of Newbury, yet he chose Newbury, where he remained forty-two years as active, and nearly twenty-seven as senior pastor.

Why did he choose Newbury? He was pleased with its situation, its nearness to the ocean, its pleasant drives and walks. A smaller parish would give him time for his literary work. He liked its sturdy independent people, and thought the sinewy arm that works must go with the sober mind that thinks, believing that they who out of their own pockets pay for the preaching would be attentive listeners. Hence a vital spark was dropped into Newbury First Parish which lives today, in its Sunday School established May 10, 1818; its Women's Missionary Society, dating from April 22, 1819; its famous Sunday School Picnics, the first held July 4, 1838; its Parish Circle organized May 10, 1852 composed of both men and women, "young men and maidens," whose object was "mutual benefit, improvement and social enjoyment." Later this society became exclusively a woman's organization and June 25, 1855, it was incorporated as the Ladies' Benevolent Society, the title it holds today.

It is the spiritual growth of a church that is the real test of its usefulness to the community, but as that is impossible to evaluate, and as there is a strength in numbers, which cannot be ignored, it should be noted that three hundred and sixty men and women in-

clusive united with the church during Mr. Withington's ministry.<sup>1</sup>

An impressive rather than an eloquent preacher, Mr. Withington had the ability to convey his thought so as to arouse and hold the attention of his audience and stimulate the mind. He was a thinker, a deep student of human nature, and while he knew its frailty, he regarded "man, as immortal and created to no mean destiny." He believed that the mind or soul is one's self, that it cannot be forced but can be persuaded; that "temptation is never master as long as the mind listens and resists," that choice is a matter of will, and sin is voluntary. With these beliefs he employed his power of reasoning "to make the road to eternity as little dangerous as is possible in this world of snares and pitfalls."

Although gentle and modest he had the courage of his convictions and was fearless when duty pointed the way.

Previous to 1819 meetinghouses were unheated; almost every one possessed a foot stove, an invention brought from England. It consisted of a pan for live coals placed in a perforated metal box encased in a wooden frame. A brass handle was attached so that it could be carried by hand, and as its name indicates, it was used as a foot warmer. Later stoves were introduced. The one in Newbury meetinghouse was placed in the centre of the broad aisle; consequently when the minister's eldest daughter was married it was necessary for the bridal party of eight to separate and go each side of the stove and then reunite. Still later came the central heating plant which is used today.

Music was another important feature of the times. Just why a clarinet and bass viol were selected as the most suitable musical instruments to accompany the singers is not easy to determine, but that they were used for many years is a fact. It is interesting to note that two of these bass viols used in the First Parish meetinghouse still survive. Next came the piano, the melodeon and then the organ.

We have no record of the meetinghouse being artificially lighted until the fall of 1853 when lamps were bought at an expense of \$87.34. These must have been for the use of sperm oil as kerosene had not been introduced. Several years later it was first sold by a

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<sup>1</sup> Catalogue of Members First Church of Newbury, 1859. Ecclesiastical History of Essex County, 1865.

druggist for \$1.50 per quart.

In these early days there was no vestry, and a room in a house formerly standing at the head of Marlborough Street was hired for religious purposes, such as the Tuesday evening lecture. This was one of the most successful features of Mr. Withington's ministry. On such occasions, it is said, the room was always well filled. Mr. Withington spoke extemporaneously on almost any important subject that came to mind, using his powers of imagery, wit, wisdom and experience to illustrate his theme.

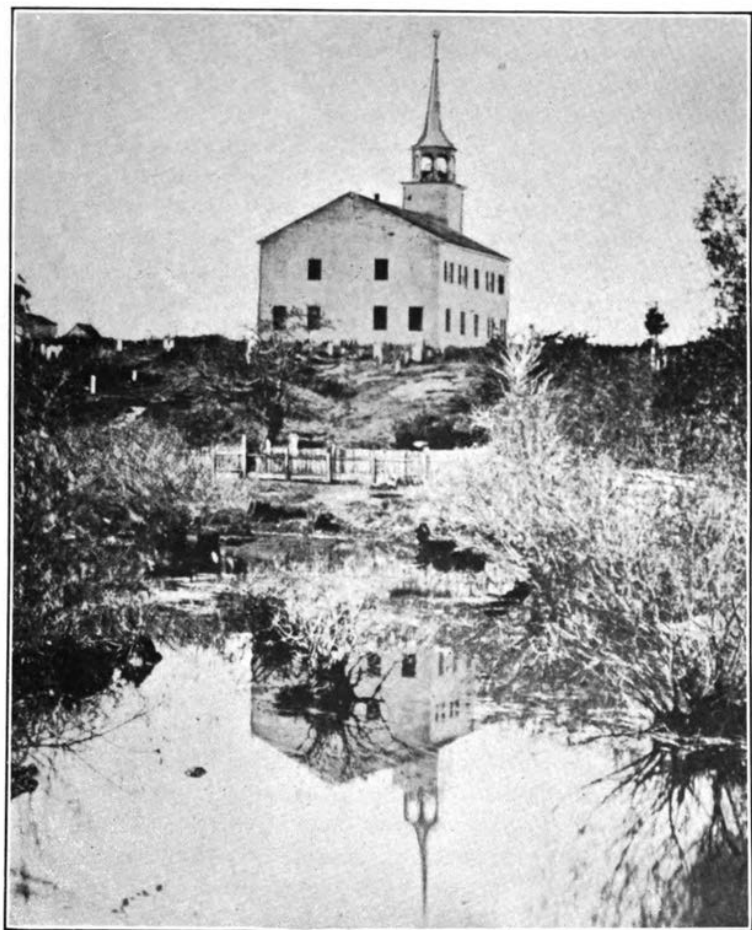
It is probable that in this room the Sunday School was organized, for Mrs. Withington in her diary under date of May 10, 1818, recorded the "Sabbath school was opened"; again "August 9, Sabbath school commenced in the meeting-house." This proves that some other place of assembly was first used.

Sunday schools were established in Philadelphia, but not until the fall of 1817 was one organized in Newburyport. The children of all religious societies met at the Court House on the Mall and were given instruction, but the Sunday School of the First Parish was the first established by an individual society.

At some period a vestry was built between the meetinghouse and the present vestry and was used for many years.

The meetinghouse, built in 1806, was, according to the English custom, surrounded by a churchyard. In 1822, the older part of the stone wall, that on either side of the meetinghouse, was built by subscriptions of either money or labor as is attested by the following: "Newbury, June 4, 1822. We, the subscribers, in view of the ruinous appearance of the burial-yard inclosure by the Rev. Mr. Withington's meeting-house, do hereby agree, as a testimony of our respect to the memory of our friends (there interred) & to the sacred house adjoining, to pay in money, labour or materials, the amount affixed to our respective names for the purpose of erecting in front a *brick wall on a stone foundation*, & a handsome fence around the other parts of the burying ground which sums shall be paid on demand into the hands of a Committee chosen by us, the subscribers."

In 1819, after long years of petition on the part of the inhabitants and protests from Newbury, the General Court passed an act to incorporate the town now known as West Newbury. In 1764, when Newburyport was made a separate town, the upper side of High



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Street extending to the Turnpike and all Belleville remained a part of Newbury.

As Newburyport became more and more a commercial and manufacturing town, several prominent merchants residing on the westerly side of High Street felt their interests would be better protected if annexed to Newburyport, Newbury being almost entirely a farming district. For this reason Mr. Ebenezer Wheelwright and others petitioned the General Court in 1821 to annex this district to Newburyport. This was vigorously opposed by the inhabitants of Newbury, and although in the thirty years, the General Court was petitioned again and again, it was not until 1851, when Newburyport became a city, that the separation was allowed and Newbury, once more, lost in territory and taxable property. Originally Newbury contained about thirty thousand acres,—thirteen miles in length, six in breadth,—and was in territory one of the largest settlements in the province. The area of Newbury is today, as it has been for the past eighty-four years, twelve square miles.

Slavery was at this time growing into one of the momentous questions of the day and was to terminate in what James Truslow Adams called *The Great American Tragedy*. Newbury was not uninterested in this great question, for when the New England Anti-slavery society was formed, Jan. 6, 1832, one of its twelve members was from Newbury. The constitution of the society includes the following: "We hold that whoever retains his fellow man, in bondage is guilty of a grievous wrong . . . we declare that we will not operate on the existing relation of society by other than peaceful means, and that we will give no countenance to violence or insurrection."

Mr. Withington was a strong and ardent abolitionist. He looked upon slavery as a moral rather than a political issue. In consequence, he preached, lectured and wrote vigorously, and sometimes gave offence by his fervid utterances.

Another social reform in which Mr. Withington was deeply interested was temperance. Our early ancestors were not immune from the use of liquors, but with their vigorous bodies exposed to cold, hard work, and discomfort, and with strong heads, they partook with more or less impunity. When Mr. Withington came to Newbury he was unmarried and therefore boarded. The mistress of the house, a kindly, middle-aged woman, who knew the custom of the



clergy, following his return from afternoon service, started to hang the tea kettle over the fire in preparation for mixing a glass of toddy. To her astonishment Mr. Withington told her he did not require it.

In this ever so long ago, even the ministers' association did not, at their dinners, consider the table well furnished without a bountiful supply of liquors. They too had strong heads and saw no harm in potations of brandy and wine. Mr. Withington did not approve of the strong liquors; so when the association met with him he found himself without a supply. This was thought to be a bold and courageous act. A few years later the subject came up for discussion in the association and the Reverends Perry, Dimmick and Withington were appointed to present a scriptural view of the subject. It is a hundred years or more since even wine has been served at an association dinner.

In 1840 Mr. Withington reviewed the temperance movement in Massachusetts, in an address which was printed, and ran through several editions. He begins, "For several years past, a glorious and very successful war has been waged in our Commonwealth against that most deformed and worst of all tyrants—Intemperance . . . . How often are we compelled, in reading the history of moral reformation, to see a cause begin in wisdom and end in folly." Mr. Withington evidently disapproved of the temperance legislation. Especially if a moderate law was disobeyed, he disapproved of any attempt to strengthen it by one more stringent; to quote again from the address, "The only way to preserve government in our country is to confine it to its practical objects. If there should ever arise in our land a set of men, incited by an unwise zeal and misled by impracticable theories, who should attempt to apply *the strong arm of the law* to objects which, under the genius of republicanism, it never can effect, such men, in the end, will do much to prostrate all power; and the reins of authority will snap in their hands. Strange that sober men should be so perverse! that zealous virtue should never pause to think! . . . .

"It is always best to ask, in all schemes of legislation, what the people will bear. And by the word, bear, I mean what they will execute. Laws partially executed are but legalized injustice. Abstract perfection is the very objection which a good man, who

mingles experience with goodness, would urge against a law which is to be executed by imperfect men in this partial world. The secret of strength is moderation; and republicanism too is a very critical machine.

"We cannot expect to exterminate drunkenness any more than other sins, until God blesses his gospel and a better day dawns on the world. On the other hand, I must be permitted to say, that it seems to me, while temperance men confined themselves to rational measures their cause was peculiarly successful . . . . Trace the evil to its cause, and endeavor to remove it. Remember some are drunkards because they are poor; some because they are idle; some because they are disappointed; some because they are ignorant; some for an unhappy nervous system; . . . . Reflect that there are indirect as well as direct efforts to oppose this evil; and that sometimes the indirect efforts are the most effectual . . . . Very little good has been done by the *absolute shall*. It provokes all the pugnacity that slumbers in a Yankee's heart."

In 1831, Mr. Withington preached the Election Sermon before the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Council, and the General Court.

The two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Newbury was celebrated May 26, 1835, with much enthusiasm. The citizens of Newbury, Newburyport, and West Newbury united in making the arrangements and in providing the necessary funds by private contribution. The committee on arrangements, which included members of the three towns, was organized under the chairmanship of Moses Little. The chief features of the occasion were a procession, public exercises in the Unitarian Church, and a dinner. Carriages were provided for the soldiers of the Revolution who rode in the procession. At the church service, the oration of the day was delivered by Hon. Caleb Cushing. Later in the day about seven hundred persons dined at a pavilion erected on land now included in Oak Hill Cemetery. Hon. Ebenezer Mosely presided at this banquet and introduced a number of speakers, including Hon. Edward Everett.

October 20, 1846, Mr. Withington preached "A Sermon for the Two Hundreth Anniversary of the standing of the First Church in

Newbury on its present<sup>2</sup> site." Hon. George Lunt wrote a hymn of eight verses for the occasion.

It may be interesting to read a description of the parish written eighty-nine years ago. "This ancient parish may be considered as the very concentration of the character of New England. Here was found, as in a miniature, with lines not the less strong for their littleness, all its virtues and all its faults. The first parish of Newbury gives abundant proofs, in its written records, that it preferred strenuous liberty to peaceful bondage; that it could attend on the ordinances and hearken to the counsels of a minister, and yet resist him; pay him his salary very punctually; take off the hat whenever it met him, with the most conventional reverence, and yet draw the line where they supposed justice and encroachment met; and defend their purposes with the most pious obstinacy. This pulpit has always been sacred to moderation. If judicious preachers have had some success here in forming an intelligent audience, perhaps an intelligent audience has had some effect in producing judicious preachers."

After forty years' service, Dr. Withington resigned as minister of the First Parish, but this the people were not ready to accept; so he remained another two years. His resignation took effect October 31, 1858, before he had reached his seventieth year, and on the anniversary of his ordination.

In person Dr. Withington was tall and slender, with black hair, so black that one of the parishioners asked his wife if it did not crock the pillow. After middle life, his hair without losing its abundance, became white as snow. His eyes were another noticeable feature. Sometimes mild and gentle, they could flash and be terrifying, like lightning. They were always bright and alert.

Some years after his settlement, Mrs. Withington inherited from her father, Dr. Nathan Noyes of Newburyport, a tract of land, some twenty-five acres, upon which a house was built for the accommodation of their large family. Here he continued to live to the end of his days. It was numbered 2 High Street.

After his retirement, Dr. Withington pursued his studies and

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<sup>2</sup> Directly opposite where the church now stands.

wrote prolifically for publication in various reviews and periodicals. He wrote a *Commentary on the Song of Solomon*, which one critic calls a "very readable book." He further states that Dr. Withington shows that the Song has a spiritual meaning quite peculiar to itself, that there is a "Dramatic Element in Scripture"—"Uses for the Imagination"—which are of radical importance to the right interpretation of the Bible. In a theological review, another writer refers to the book as "the ablest exposition ever published of the wrong theory of explanation of Solomon's Song."

Abstemious living preserved a never rugged physique, and allowed Dr. Withington his customary walk to town, even to advanced years. Once when he was eighty and at the sea shore with his family he swam out beyond the breakers and floated in on the tide. Even for an expert swimmer, that was a test of courage at his age.

Probably his last public address was at the funeral of William Wheelwright, October 17, 1873. This was published by the family and called "In Memoriam."

The source of Dr. Withington's power was his belief that he was a child of the living God. This gave him dignity and a noble humility. He had great sympathy, understanding and belief in the finer possibilities of human nature. His tastes were simple; he was without worldly ambition, and his capacity for friendship and mental gifts were such as to draw men of learning to his home.

It is not usually regarded as unmitigated good fortune for a young minister to be colleague to an older one, but here is what the Rev. Mr. Folsom wrote: "I shall always count it the chief felicity of my first pastorate that it was associated with Dr. Withington."

Dr. Fiske, for many years pastor at Belleville, wrote of Dr. Withington, "He was a rare man, simple-hearted as a child, abreast of the thought of the age; till he passed eighty, he perused his classics, and his Hebrew; a man conservative, but progressive, a man with whom I was intimately associated during all my ministry. He has stimulated every one."

This tribute comes from Yale: "He was a man of original thought and vigorous expression; and of extensive and accurate learning. No one could meet him, even casually, without admiration of his unusual gifts."

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote:

“Who to wit like that of South,  
And the Syrian’s golden mouth,  
Doth the homely pathos add  
Which the pilgrim preachers had;  
Breaking like a child at play,  
Gilded idols of the day,  
Cant of knave and pomp of Jove  
Tossing with his ridicule,  
Yet, in earnest or in jest,  
Ever keeping truth abreast.”

## **CHAPTER IV**

**1859-1935**

On January 30, 1859, John R. Thurston was ordained as pastor of the First Parish Church, to preach in its pulpit and to minister to the parish. He was called the junior pastor, while Dr. Withington retained the title of senior pastor. Mr. Thurston was born in 1831 in Bangor, Maine, a descendant of Old Newbury stock, his ancestors having emigrated to Maine. He was a graduate of Yale, class of 1851, and had spent two years in the Theological Seminary at Bangor.

The ordination services took place in the old church which stood in the graveyard, and which Dr. Popkin had called "a pleasant edifice." The council was organized by the choice of Rev. L. F. Dimmick, D. D., as chairman and Rev. Dr. Fisher as secretary. There were some twenty-five delegates present from Newburyport, Newbury, West Newbury, Rowley, Byfield, Georgetown, Lowell, Worcester and Bangor. After examination of the candidate for three hours upon his doctrinal views, religious experience and motives which had led him to the ministry, the council had a private session. Following a dinner in Parker Hall, provided by the parish, the ordination exercises took place as follows:

Voluntary by the choir, "Lord through the World proclaim  
Jehovah's highest praise"

Prayer by Rev. Dr. Sweetser of Worcester

Original hymn written by Dr. Withington, sung by congregation

Sermon by Prof. George Shepard, D. D., of Bangor Theological Seminary

Choir—"How Beautiful upon the Mountains are the feet of  
Him that bringest glad tidings"

Consecration prayer by Rev. David Thurston, D. D., of Winthrop, Maine

Charge by Rev. Dr. Withington

Right hand of Fellowship extended by Rev. J. L. Jenkins,  
a classmate of Mr. Thurston

Address by Rev. Dr. Dimmick

Concluding prayer by Rev. John Pike of Rowley

Benediction by Rev. Mr. Thurston

Mr. Thurston brought his family to Newburyport to live, as there was no parsonage at that time in Newbury. His wife was taken away by death during his ministry here, and he married again after leaving the church at Newbury.

During the period of the Civil War, the First Parish fulfilled its part in the patriotic service of preserving the Union. The actual number of men from the parish who served in the war is not known, but the town of Newbury furnished one hundred and eighty-nine men of whom five were commissioned officers, a surplus of twenty-five men over all demands. Probably half of this number were from the Byfield parish, but added to the list would be probably some from the Newburyport section.

Mr. Thurston was an able, talented man and a scholar. His sermons show sincerity and depth of faith, although they lack somewhat the vigor and brilliancy of those of his predecessor. It must have been a difficult position for him to assume his duties under the eye of Dr. Withington, who had become so firmly established in the community and in the hearts of the people, but Mr. Thurston seems to have carried on the work with serenity and a good measure of success. Fifty new members were admitted to the church during the period of his ministry.

A large and well trained choir of mixed voices sat in the "singing seats" in the back of the old church, under the direction of Miss Lucy Coffin who had been conducting a singing school in the vestry, with Joseph Tappan as organist. Miss Coffin was a cousin of Joshua Coffin, the historian, and lived in the old Tristram Coffin house now the property of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Afterward, Mr. Tappan combined the duties of organist and choir director.

Just after midnight on the 26th of January, 1868, the church was burned by an incendiary. The Newburyport fire department arrived promptly, but lack of water made it impossible to save the structure, which was destroyed with all its contents. The rooster on the spire fell clear and was not much damaged. It is recorded that the senior pastor made this comment: "The Oldtown Church never shone bright-



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er than it did that winter morning, and like some of the saints born there, it died in glory."

The ashes of the house were still hot when the parish met and voted to rebuild. The building committee, consisting of Messrs. David T. Woodwell, David Hale, Joseph Little, James C. Colman, Edward H. Little, Moses K. Noyes, John N. Rolfe, Joseph A. Lunt, and Joseph Danforth, acted so promptly that the new structure was raised early the next summer. The architect was Col. Fred J. Coffin, and the contract for building was taken by Charles H. Hale, son of Deacon Ezra Hale. He subsequently associated with himself in the work George A. Noyes and Giles Adams. The only man now living who helped build the new church is Charles A. Lunt, who has been a lifelong resident in the parish and who was a very young man at the time. The dimensions of the building were about 70 by 50 feet, besides a porch on the front and an organ loft at the rear. The height of the spire was 118 feet and the house was made to seat six hundred persons comfortably. The record says there were 192 "slips" on the floor and 28 in the gallery. The total cost of building and land was \$15,500, all of which was raised and the house dedicated without a single dollar of incumbrance. The interior woodwork was of chestnut with walnut trimmings. The organ was bought by the women of the parish at an expense of \$3200. They also bought the carpet and fixtures for \$1500 more. The beautiful grill work over the organ was made in the carpenter shop of Adams and Noyes in Newburyport. The spire was built on the floor of the church, and was raised into position by Pritchard Bros., ship riggers. It is said that Joseph Tappan assembled the keyboard and stops of the organ, and as he had original ideas on the subject of arrangement, some difficulty is occasionally encountered by organists who are unfamiliar with it.

The women of the parish, in order to raise the money for the organ, etc., held a fair in Parker Hall. The old church bell was melted down and little bells made from it which were sold to raise money. Also framed pictures of the old church and of Dr. Withington were sold, and a poem entitled "The Old Bell of Newbury," written by George Inness, was sold in pamphlet form. Thus in all sorts of ways money was provided to meet the expenses.

The new bell, 800 pounds in weight, was the gift of Moses Colman of Boston. Miss Phebe Newman gave a fine folio copy of the

Bible, and a massive quarto edition of the Scriptures was donated by Rev. Dr. Sweetser of Worcester. Still another one was sent by S. S. Constant, Esq., of New York, a son of old Newbury. The pulpit chairs were given by Josiah Hale of Newburyport, the marble tablets by Edmund Smith, Jacob Stone and Mrs. Jane Alter. \$100 for furnishings was given by Mrs. Sarah W. Hale and William Bannister, Esq. The hymn books for the pulpit were furnished by Mrs. Godfrey of Peoria, Ill., a former parishioner. A gold-lined silver baptismal basin was the gift of the Misses Sweetser of Newburyport. It is said that Rev. Mr. Thurston designed the pulpit, which is old English style of beautiful workmanship, with I. H. S. carved on the front, and on the sides the figure of the cross. The communion table and chairs were "a memorial offering from one long a worshipper in the old house, who now joins in the praises of the upper sanctuary." These articles of furniture are all black walnut. The ancient rooster was restored to his perch on the church spire. A row of open sheds was built in the rear of the church to accommodate the horses of those attending the services. Judge Stephen W. Marston, a member of the church, died in 1873, and his son, Stephen, gave money for the purchase of the clock which now adorns the steeple. The choir seats were placed in the front part of the church, a change from the old custom of having them behind the congregation.

The new church was dedicated March 4, 1869, with a program of appropriate exercises. Although the weather was very inclement on the occasion, the house was filled and it was estimated that there were a thousand persons in attendance. Joseph Tappan presided at the organ and the musical selections were very fine. The program was as follows:

Voluntary

Invocation, Rev. S. J. Spalding

Anthem

Reading of Scriptures

Sermon by Rev. J. R. Thurston, from text 1st Kings, 8:63,

"So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the  
house of the Lord"

Prayer of dedication, Rev. L. L. Withington

Anthem

Prayer—Rev. Randolph Campbell

Hymn—The same one sung in the old church, Oct. 31, 1816,  
at the ordination of Rev. Dr. Withington

Rev. Mr. Thurston went to Whitinsville, Mass., where he had received a call, in March, 1870. He preached his farewell sermon March 27, 1870, from the text 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I determined not to know anything among you save Christ and Him crucified." After leaving Newbury, he received the degree of D. D. and also served a term as Representative in the Massachusetts General Court.

The heat from the fire which burned the church destroyed or partly destroyed many of the gravestones nearby in the cemetery. In 1869 the land which the church had occupied with the space at the south, where the horses had been left for many years during Sunday services, was laid out into burial lots and sold at public auction by vote of the parish. Daniel Lunt had previously bought and removed the old vestry to Rolfe's Lane where it was converted into a dwelling house, and he also bought the hearse house and moved it away, leaving these grounds free of any building for the first time in two hundred twenty-three years. The wall on the street was completed in that year by Joseph H. Currier, who built the central part.

The next pastor was Rev. Omar W. Folsom, who was ordained October 31, 1872. He was of Quaker stock, a native of Sandwich, N. H., and a graduate of Dartmouth. A few months after his ordination he brought his Canadian bride to Newbury, and during the eleven years they remained in the First Parish, they set a high standard of living, both being very refined, cultivated, and active in church and parish work.

As an illustration of the independent spirit of nonconformity which was still alive at this period, a parishioner objected to having responsive reading as a part of the church service, calling it popish, and emphasized her opposition by spending that portion of the service in the cemetery opposite the church.

There is a record dated April 25, 1872, showing a list of ninety-three persons who pledged sums of money to the amount of \$3043.50 towards building a parsonage for the First Parish in Newbury. A complete list of the subscribers and their donations with the record of expenditure was kept by Henry B. Little, treasurer. The house was completed in that year, and the street on which it was located was called Hanover Street. Mr. and Mrs. Folsom occupied the parsonage and raised a family there.

The Oldtown lyceum lectures and discussions at the vestry furnished much pleasure and instruction for a number of years. Many subjects were presented to large audiences by interesting speakers, and the newspapers of 1877 and other years about that time gave accounts of debates on "Women's Suffrage," "Free Trade versus Protection" and similar timely topics. Rev. Mr. Folsom was the president for some time and his interest made the organization a live one.

Mr. Folsom was called to Bath, Maine, June 5, 1884. He is now nearly ninety-one years old, but spends his summer there and the rest of the year in Washington, D. C.

In 1874 and 1875 the silver mining boom struck the town, and pasture land at the west end of the parish seemed to promise rich investment. Promoters and speculators agitated the vicinity for a time, but the expense of mining the ore proved prohibitive and the market was uncertain, so that the excitement died out. The rich deposits of silver still remain deep in Newbury soil, although from time to time attempts have been made to re-open the Chipman mine in Scotland district.

On September 5, 1877, a large gathering of interested persons met at the Lower Green and formed the Newbury Historical and Antiquarian Society. William Little was chosen president. Nathaniel Dole entertained the party at his residence, and when dinner time came, the Groveland Cornet Band escorted them to a pavilion, where they enjoyed a fine banquet. At the meeting, letters were read from John Greenleaf Whittier, Hon. Eben F. Stone, Hon. George Somerby, and Hon. C. W. Tuttle; speeches were made by James Parton, Caleb Cushing, Major Poor and Rev. J. F. Spalding.

In 1883 Miss Anna Jaques, who lived in the old Jaques homestead on Parker Street, gave \$25,000 to Dr. F. A. Howe to establish a hospital in Newburyport. The institution was soon established, and after a few years a new building was erected which has always borne the name of Anna Jaques Hospital.

In this connection perhaps the fact should be mentioned that Miss Jaques willed fifteen thousand dollars to the parish, which was left in the care of the deacons, the income to be used as needed. An additional thousand dollars was given, the income to be used in caring for the cemetery.

More recently a gift of ten thousand dollars was received from Mr. Wilmot R. Evans in memory of his wife, the income to be used in furthering the purposes of the church.

On November 20, 1884, Rev. Francis Wood Sanborn was installed as the tenth pastor of the First Church in Newbury. He was born in Marblehead in 1852, graduated from Phillips Academy at Andover in 1871 and Amherst College in 1875. After a three years' course at Andover Theological School he was ordained to the ministry in 1878. He served for seven years at Central Congregational Church at Yarmouth, Maine, until he received the call to Newbury. The installation exercises included: The Invocation by Rev. George L. Gleason of Byfield, Reading of the Council's decision by scribe, Reading of Scripture by Rev. C. P. Mills of Newburyport, Sermon by Rev. S. E. Herrick, D. D., of Boston, Installing Prayer by Rev. D. T. Fiske, D. D., of Newburyport, Charge to Pastor by Rev. P. S. Boyd of Amesbury, Right Hand of Fellowship by Rev. H. E. Barnes of Haverhill, Address to the People by Rev. O. W. Folsom of Bath, Maine, Concluding Prayer by Rev. E. B. Palmer of Ipswich, and Benediction by the Pastor.

Mr. Sanborn was a man of sterling qualities and a profound scholar. The first Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor in this parish was organized under his direction April 5, 1886. Great enthusiasm was manifested in the weekly meetings by the young people and an attendance of fifty or more at many of the meetings through the first years was recorded in the reports. The last report was made on May 1, 1910, after which date the society seemed to pass out of existence until its revival in 1919. Another revival occurred in 1934.

The senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Withington, died on April 22, 1885, in his ninety-sixth year.

Sunday evening prayer meetings at the Lower Green schoolhouse were instituted about this time and were well attended by young and old, including many young men who were strangers to the town and who worked on nearby farms. An attendance of fifty-seven was recorded in the spring of 1888.

On June 10, 1885, the First Parish co-operated with all the other parishes within the bounds of old Newbury in an elaborate celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its settlement. In

the forenoon there were exercises in City Hall with addresses and with music furnished by orchestra and chorus. The principal address was made by Dr. Samuel C. Bartlett, president of Dartmouth College. Rev. F. W. Sanborn of the First Church in Newbury made the prayer, and Rev. D. T. Fiske read the Scriptures from an old Breeches Bible printed in 1557 and loaned for the occasion by a descendant of the Bartlett family. There was a big parade headed by the police and military, with Carter's band. Thirteen hundred school children from Newbury, West Newbury, and Newburyport took part in the procession, the larger pupils on foot and the smaller ones in decorated horse-drawn barges. There was a banquet served in tents at March's Hill. Following the dinner many prominent men, twenty-one speakers in all, from Newburyport and elsewhere gave addresses! In the evening a reception and levee at City Hall completed the day's program, which was under the auspices of the Old Newbury Historical Society with William Little as president.

Mr. Sanborn resigned the pastorate in the fall of 1896. Forty-three members had been admitted to the church during the twelve years he ministered to the parish.

In 1897 the large tract of field land just to the east of the Upper Green, formerly a part of the John Woodbridge estate, was purchased by a syndicate which opened it up into streets and sold many building lots. It was called Montgomery Park. Numerous dwelling houses have been built there and new members have been added to First Parish in this way.

The summer colony at Plum Island, which has been steadily increasing in numbers until a large part of the island is thickly dotted with cottages, adds but little to the membership or attendance at the First Church. A Roman Catholic Church, which has been built there in recent years, ministers to the spiritual needs of many of the summer colonists who attend any church.

The opening of the horse car lines in Newburyport and Newbury, soon superseded by trolley lines, brought many changes into the lives and habits of Oldtown people and marked the advent of a new era. Trolley rides and outings tended to draw the attention of the people more and more away from their homes, and social privileges were made possible to many who had previously had no means of transportation. Band concerts, open air vaudeville, and dances at Parker

River drew large crowds on the open cars. Half-hour and sometimes fifteen-minute trips from Newburyport, with often-times six or eight cars in line, testified to the popularity of the resort. Some of us remember the "tow horses" at Meetinghouse Hill and Gravel Hill during the horse car era. These animals were hooked on to help pull the loaded cars up the inclines.

One annual event dating away back through the generations forms a pleasant memory, the parish picnic. In the summer, at a time convenient for the farmers between haying seasons, all members of the parish who could, packed their picnic baskets and boarded the hay scow, or "gundelow," at Parker River bridge. As the men wielded the big oars, the boat with its precious freight proceeded slowly down the river to the Half Way House. The young men preferred to row down because on the return trip in the evening they expected to be otherwise engaged, and so turned the labor over to the married men who were past the romantic age. In later years the parish picnic and Farmers' Club picnic combined their outings and chartered a steamer for the day, which would tow the big scow to Ipswich Bluffs. Both boats were heavily loaded with passengers. Outdoor sports, the picnic lunches with the addition of a huge clam chowder made on the spot, and dancing in the barn always made up the program. Josiah Dyer played the fiddle and Daniel Thurlow the harp, while old and young joined in the Virginia Reel, Portland Fancy, Lady of the Lake, Lancers and Plain Quadrille. These outings were discontinued about twenty-five years ago.

The Newbury Farmers' Club was organized at Parker Hall on December 20, 1886, with Sidney F. Newman as the first president. A constitution was drawn up stating that the object of the club was to promote a knowledge of practical farming and gardening in connection with social enjoyment. The society continued for over twenty years with well attended meetings, the membership being over one hundred through its existence. Speakers from other cities and towns, entertainments and banquets, and other forms of social enjoyment made the Farmers' Club a real influence for good in the parish and community.

The Newbury Improvement Society was also organized during this period. Its membership list included many who worked hard and constructively to improve and beautify the town. Meetings were



held at the homes of members and many social events were enjoyed. The society went out of existence about the time of the World War.

On September 19, 1895, commemoration exercises were held at the Upper Green on the occasion of placing a marked boulder to designate the spot where the expedition to Quebec under Benedict Arnold encamped in 1775. This was arranged as a tribute to Old Newbury by the City Improvement Society and the Historical Society of Old Newbury. Hon. E. P. Dodge presided. There was a prayer by Rev. H. C. Hovey, D. D., a historical review of the Quebec expedition by Rev. J. W. Dodge, and addresses by William Little, president of the Historical Society, Capt. Nathaniel Appleton of the Society of Colonial Wars, and Lothrop Withington in behalf of the absent sons of Old Newbury.

About 1896 the Newbury Post Office near the Upper Green was discontinued and the Oldtown section of the parish was placed in the Newburyport postal district, the mail being sent out by mounted carrier. The Farms and Turnpike sections were put into the Rowley postal district.

On May 11, 1897, Rev. Charles Sumner Holton was installed as the eleventh pastor of the First Church in Newbury. He was born in West Medford, Mass., later removing to Amherst with his family. There he attended Amherst Preparatory College for two years and four years afterward graduated from Amherst College in 1889. He spent one year at Yale Divinity School and then attended Andover Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1892. After occupying a Congregational church pulpit in Eastport, Maine, for five and a half years, Mr. Holton was called to Newbury, where he has remained as pastor until the present time, 1935, a period of nearly thirty-eight years.

The installation exercises took place as follows:

Invocation	Rev. George L. Todd
Reading of Scriptures	Rev. Arthur S. Burrill
Sermon	Rev. George Harris, D. D.
Prayer of Installation	Rev. George Kingsbury, D. D.
Right Hand of Fellowship	Rev. A. W. Hitchcock
Charge to Pastor	Rev. W. H. Bolster, D. D.
Address to People	Rev. F. W. Sanborn
Prayer	Rev. Myron O. Patton
Benediction	Rev. C. S. Holton



REV. CHARLES S. HOLTON, PASTOR 1897 —



There had previously been two church services, on Sunday morning and afternoon, with Sunday School preceding the afternoon service, but a change was made at the time Mr. Holton came. Thereafter one service was held in the afternoon with Sunday School in the morning. In the course of time other changes have been made in the schedules. At present church and Sunday School services are held in the morning. Both Mr. and Mrs. Holton have taken great interest in the Sunday School. Mrs. Holton has been superintendent of the primary department for many years. The school has flourished with increased attendance, and Oldtown has always been proud of its "Sabbath School."

Mr. and Mrs. Holton have also been very active in calling throughout the parish and have been most zealous in aiding their parishioners in time of trouble and bereavement.

The present church covenant, supplanting that of 1786, was adopted by vote of the church in April, 1895. There is also a Form of Admission recommended by the National Council of Congregational Churches at Minneapolis in 1883 and adopted by vote of the church on December 22, 1897. The Manual of the church issued in 1927 gives a list of pastors with dates of their service, also a catalog of members. There have been eleven pastors and two teachers in three hundred years. There have also been thirty-two deacons during that time. Three hundred and sixteen members have been added to the church roster during Mr. Holton's pastorate. There are now two hundred and sixty-four living members of the First Church in Newbury. Of this present membership, all save twenty have been added under Mr. Holton. The reports show two hundred and twenty-eight families listed today in First Parish.

For many years the singing at church services was led by a quartet of mixed voices. In recent years a volunteer chorus choir has occupied the "singing seats." This group was led for many years by Mrs. Holton, herself a talented musician. Mr. Wallace Adams succeeded her as leader. A few years ago the pastor and choir adopted the custom of wearing vestments, adding a further touch of dignity to the Sunday service.

Community services on Sunday evenings in the church have been held from time to time during recent years and have furnished enjoyment to all who cared to attend, in the way of lectures, concerts, and other forms of religious entertainment.

In 1899 Rev. Mr. Titchmarsh, pastor of the Congregational Church at Newbury, England, who had come to Boston as a delegate to an international convention, preached in the pulpit of the First Church in Newbury, Mass., and received a very cordial welcome from the Newbury people.

On May 23, 1910, the Historical Society celebrated the two hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of Newbury with a religious service at the First Church. Rev. Herbert Lombard, pastor of the Byfield Congregational Church and president of the society, presided. There was music appropriate to the occasion under the direction of Richard Adams, with Mrs. Lucy Tilton Lunt as organist. Rev. Charles S. Holton, Rev. John R. Thurston, and Rev. Charles Fletcher Dole contributed to the program, which was largely attended.

At the forty-fifth reunion of his class, at Amherst College, in June, 1934, Mr. Holton was honored by an invitation to preach a sermon to his classmates. His address was delivered in the Second Congregational Church in Amherst.

Rev. Edward P. Holton, brother of the pastor, made his home in Newbury when he retired after many years of service under the American Board in India. He and his wife have contributed largely to the religious life of the parish. The community suffered a great loss by his death in 1934.

In addition to the Women's Missionary Society and the Ladies' Benevolent Society, which are considered in a later chapter, various other organizations have been affiliated with the church. Girls in several Sunday School classes formed circles of King's Daughters in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Regular meetings were held and much helpful work was done for the benefit of the church, Sunday School, and needy individuals. \$190 was taken in at one fair in December, 1903, and the proceeds devoted to church work.

The Dorcas Society, which was formed some years ago, is composed of the younger women and girls of the parish. It performs many good works and carries on many interesting programs throughout the year.

First Parish has associated itself with Newburyport parishes in forming troops of Boy Scouts which have accomplished much useful work according to the standards and requirements of the national organization.

4-H Clubs organized under the State Department of Agriculture, have furnished constructive programs of work for the young people in the line of gardening, poultry raising, dairying, forestry, canning, and sewing. Also classes for women in various branches of home economics have been conducted with teachers from the County Extension Service.

Newbury Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, was formed in March, 1904, with one hundred and five charter members. The object of the organization is to help the farmers in their agricultural problems and to provide social contacts. The original hall built near the Upper Green was burned in the spring of 1927, but was rebuilt. Regular meetings are held there. The hall is also used for entertainments and by the town as a precinct voting place.

On July 5, 1927, a group of interested men and women met and formed the Society of the Sons and Daughters of the First Settlers of Newbury, of which Mrs. Anne Colman Moody was the real founder and the first president. The society now includes many members from all parts of the world. The ancient Jackman-Willett house, one of the town's first dwellings, was purchased by the society for a home, and moved to a site near Little Oldtown Hill, where work of restoration has been done and a collection of furniture and utensils used by the first settlers is gradually being made and classified. One of the best things the society has accomplished is the restoration of the first burying ground under the hill.

The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities has acquired ownership of the Tristram Coffin House, the Swett-Hsley House, and the Nathaniel Knight House, all of which have been put in good order.

In former years the youth of the part of the parish which lies in Newbury had received their elementary education in ungraded district schools, the Lower Green, Ridge, Upper Green Schools at the east end of the town and the Farms School in that section, while in Newburyport the children enjoyed the advantages of graded schools. In 1898 a schoolhouse was built on land originally owned by John Woodbridge near Green Pond. This was called the Woodbridge School. Primary and grammar grades were established, and the children of the Farms district were sent to a similar school in Byfield.

The World War took its toll from among the men of military age. Many young men of the parish enlisted or were drafted into the different branches of the Service. From among those who went into active service, several made the supreme sacrifice and are honored by gold stars on the church flag.

On July 7, 1930, as a part of the tercentenary celebration of Massachusetts Bay Colony, the visit of George Washington to Newburyport in 1789 was re-enacted. It was a very impressive sight as Washington rode again on horseback along the High Road through Newbury, with an escort of colonial troops, as he did on the earlier date. The riders were all in appropriate costume and the ancient stagecoach was a picturesque addition.

Within the bounds of First Parish are many natural features and advantages to which its inhabitants point with pride. Swept on the east by the Atlantic, it possesses a beach of golden sand at Plum Island, unspoiled as yet by commercial enterprises, and free to all. A bird sanctuary has been set off at the southern part, which is a source of gratification to nature lovers. The two Oldtown Hills afford a sweeping panorama of typical New England scenery unsurpassed anywhere. The old winding roads are lined with ancient lofty elm trees planted in past centuries by the men whose sturdy characters are typified by those very trees. In the soil of Newbury parish are granitic rocks—diorite—which are cut by dykes where concentrations of various minerals are found, such as galena, pyrite, chalcopryrite, siderite, tetrahedrite, and various other silver, lead and copper ores. In the vicinity of Devil's Den, the main rock is magnesium limestone, from which the early settlers obtained material for plastering their dwellings. Also in this locality are found the serpentine and asbestos. Nearer the Lower Green the country rock is almost pure quartzose. At Pine Island porphyry occurs, while low down on the banks of Little River, almost where it joins the Parker, slate outcrops. The entire section is studded with products of glacial era, Oldtown Hill being a typical drumlin. Farms near its base suffer from the presence of great masses of boulder clay, while the whole ridge on which the easterly settlement is set, is the remnant of an esker extending from Oldtown Hill northerly to Grasshopper Plain in West Newbury. South of Parker River in the easterly end, the land fans out in the form of an old glacial alluvial plain.

Relics of weapons, instruments and tools made and used by the Indians still strew the land in places, and many collections are shown in Newbury and Newburyport homes of these arrow and spear heads, fishhooks, hammers, axes and pottery.

The River Parker, named for Newbury's first minister, where is its equal among rivers! It doubles, twists and winds like ancient Meander, and with its branches flows under many bridges and turns up in unexpected places. Note the bridges, Cart Creek, Leigh's, New Road, Four Rock, Trotter's, Thurlow's, Turnpike, and the recently constructed modern Parker River Bridge. Also the Parker teems with finny treasure, smelts, striped bass, white perch, tomcods, alewives, each in their season; the lowly eels and hornpout, an occasional flounder or sturgeon, and at times the schools of mackerel and herring come in from the sea. Parker River clams are uncontaminated and unsurpassed; crabs and an occasional lobster inhabit the depths, and some years ago there was a flourishing oyster bed near the First Settlers' Landing. The Parker, like English rivers, was named the River Parker, not Parker River, and it is regrettable that the original form of name was not retained. First Parish also claims contact with Merrimac and Plum Island Rivers, waters which have contributed much to the interest and welfare of the people who live near them. Plum Bush and Plum Island Bridges add to the list of bridges within the limits of the area.

Today the First Church in Newbury is no longer the center of community life that it was in former years. Many other interests have developed in the lives of the people, especially during the last fifty years. The automobile, the moving pictures, and the radio have all contributed to this diversification of interests. Some of the farms are still held by the descendants of the first settlers, but farming is on the wane in Newbury, as in the other parts of New England, because of the competition of agricultural products raised on a large scale in other sections of the country. These cheaper and more varied products are readily obtainable at all seasons of the year by our modern methods of transportation. Newbury is becoming more of a residential town, as families have moved in from Newburyport to take advantage of the lower tax rate. The rural character of the parish is less marked than formerly, and a considerable number of the parishioners reside outside the confines of Newbury. The church is still an important factor in the community, and if adjustments to new conditions are made as effectively as in the past, its beneficent influence will undoubtedly continue.





## CHAPTER V

### First Parish Sabbath School

Since there are no records of the founding of the Sabbath school of the First Church in Newbury, we are dependent upon the memories of the older members of the parish as they recall the stories of their ancestors. Probably the first record of the founding is a paper written in 1878 by Deacon Joseph Little. Miss Phoebe Harrod, then in her ninety-first year, recalled when in 1816 she and five other ladies had requested the use of the present Central Church for the instruction of the youth of the city on Sunday afternoons. This plan was ridiculed by the pastor of the church, but the school was founded in that year.

During the year 1817 the school met in the Court House on the Mall. As such buildings were not heated at that time, there were no sessions in cold weather. Lessons were taken from cards, the teacher giving to a pupil card number one which was retained until the pupil could recite the Biblical verse by heart, before the class. The card was then exchanged for number two and so forth. After the session the classes formed in lines and marched to their houses of worship.

Colonel Jeremiah Colman was one of the leaders in this Sabbath school plan and urged its adoption at the First Church. During the early part of 1818 such a school opened at the church. The new school had about thirty pupils and a few of the early teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Gerrish, Miss Sarah Little, Miss Catherine Sherburne, Miss Harriet Sherburne, Miss Edna Lunt and Miss Cornelia Sweetser. The sessions were held in the church following morning service. Lessons were similar to those at the school on the Mall except that James Noyes' *Shorter Catechism* was used. One lady recalls having been required to memorize the Epistle to the Ephesians, fifteen verses at a time, while still a junior in the school.

The school had no officers until 1838, when the church elected Deacon Jeremiah Colman as the first superintendent and Richard Adams as assistant superintendent. The church continued to elect the officers until 1842 when it was voted to allow the teachers of the

school to elect the superintendent, assistant superintendent, librarian, and treasurer.

Sometime previous to 1835 the school had collected a good sized library which it kept under the pulpit of the church. At one time there were over five hundred volumes in this library. An offering once a month as well as special offerings was taken for its upkeep.

The outstanding events in the history of this school were the picnics held in Mr. Richard Tenney's orchard which was located across from the head of Marlborough Street. These picnics were held on Independence Day in the years 1838, '39, '42, '43 and '57. There were speeches and music and bountiful dinners. In 1838 during the dinner hour, a great balloon was seen in the southeast. It proved to be Mr. Lariant who had traveled from Salem and landed on the Upper Green where the Union Choral Society was holding its outing.

The most notable of these picnics was held in 1843. The Newburyport Herald of July 6, 1843 has the following account of the picnic under the heading of:

#### **The Fourth at Oldtown**

"The Rev. Mr. Withington's society celebrated the anniversary of our independence in their usual way, by turning out en masse, forming a procession at the church under the escort of the Newburyport Artillery, accompanied by the Newburyport Brass Band. At the church, before the procession was formed, Mr. Nathaniel Little and Miss Edna Lunt were joined in matrimony by Mr. Withington, and received the cordial congratulations of a large collection of personal friends, some hundreds of whom had been pupils of the latter. The procession moved to the orchard of Messrs. R. and D. S. Tenney, where they were comfortably accommodated. The singing was first rate, under the direction of Mr. George W. Hale,—Mr. Bayley at the piano, and Mr. Frothingham and Mr. Savoy with their appropriate instruments.

"The oration, by Horace Plumer, Esq., was a very sensible production, which reflected much credit upon his taste and ability in its preparation, and being very distinctly pronounced, it was heard with pleasure by some two thousand persons. The morning services in the grove being ended, the company proceeded to the beautifully spread

tables, and in a prompt and energetic way discussed the viands there provided."

Among the toasts which followed the oration were the following:

"The Revolutionary Soldiers—May their children preserve what the fathers have won.

"Mr. Daniel Adams of Pine Island, one of the only two of their class present, rose to respond. He was called to the desk, and there addressed himself to the ladies more particularly, giving them such suggestions as he deemed suitable.

"The Historian of Newbury—Our reputation is in good hands.

"Mr. Joshua Coffin, who is preparing for the press a history of 'Our Old Newbury' took the desk and entertained the audience at some length with remarks concerning ancient matters and things in the venerable town, exhibited some time-worn manuscripts, and read from them a variety of curious things which gave assurance that our history is indeed in good hands.

"The Orator and President of the Day—the latter happily illustrates by his practice what the former has defended in his address—the advantage of public instruction.

"Mr. Plumer made a few remarks in response, excusing himself from speaking longer on the ground that he occupied the time in the morning.

"Mr. Page also responded to this sentiment. He spoke of the influence education among the whole people from the first, had exerted in bringing about the Declaration of Independence, the anniversary which we celebrate. He spoke of the great step our fathers took in advance of the age in which they lived—in advance of all ages—in first proclaiming the doctrine of educating the whole mass at the public expense.

"The exercises were closed with the singing of 'Old Hundred' by the whole assembly, and the party broke up well pleased with the day and its exercises, intending, we presume, to meet again on the same spot—a spot indeed now almost patriotic ground—where, it is admitted by all, the Oldtowners have very pleasant meetings."

The first secretary's book was not started until 1851. The records show that the school hour was divided into a study and a devotional period. The devotions consisted of the singing of a hymn, the reading of the scripture and prayer. Uniform lessons were used and the teach-

ers met once a week to study the lesson together. Once a month the school held a concert at which there was more music and Biblical questions were asked. The questions were after the style of "What news did the first carrier pigeon bring?" At one such concert this curious "Scripture Enigma" was offered: "They left their little ones at home, and whither went they did not know. They went straight forward on the road with all the wicked full in view. For the church's sake did roam, and lost their lives in doing so. They lived to man, they died to God, yet nothing of religion knew."

From 1851 the records were complete with the exception of a few brief periods. The two books covering the years to 1910 were destroyed by fire during the preparation of this paper. The destruction of these records is a distinct loss for much of the information they contained could not be obtained from any other source. Only through them could the development of the school into departments be traced. The names of the officers other than the superintendents have been lost.

In 1880 the school held a service in commemoration of the founding of the school. Deacon Joseph Little read his paper, written two years earlier, on the founding of the school. The suggestion was made to hold such meetings frequently but none such were held until the centenary on February 24, 1918. At that time papers were read relating to recollections of early Sunday School days.<sup>1</sup>

One of the outstanding undertakings of the school was a Student Council. This council was organized in 1921 to direct the social activities and the altruistic work of the school. It consisted of one representative from each class of the Junior, Intermediate and Senior departments and three members appointed by the superintendent. This organization did invaluable work in visiting shut-ins and institutions. It sponsored many socials and plays as well as directed the classes in conducting the devotional services one Sunday a month.

The School has sent donations to various charitable and missionary societies almost from its beginning. At one time the school sent money to support a native boy in an Indian school. At the same time it helped maintain a girl in a southern school and a Sunday School in the West. Later the missionary work was divided among the various boards of the Congregational Church.

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<sup>1</sup> As the papers were published in the Daily News, they are available at all times.

The school has had many very capable and conscientious workers both among teachers and officers. The roll of its officers, teachers and pupils has been destroyed and only a list of its superintendents is available. The list of superintendents is as follows: Deacon Joseph Little, Richard Adams, John Hubbard, William Thurston, Daniel Colman, Nathaniel Little, Deacon Jeremiah Colman, Deacon Joseph Little, Edmund Jaques, Elisha Bean, Jr., Deacon Joseph Little, Elisha Bean, Jr., David Smith, Deacon George Danforth, Deacon Edward Perkins, Charles Parkhurst, Deacon John Rolfe, Deacon William Humphreys, Deacon Edward Perkins, Deacon William Humphreys, Roland Woodwell, Worthen Taylor, Charles Noyes, Russell Jackson, Worthen Taylor.

One can not fail to pause a moment in commemoration of two superintendents who have served the school so faithfully for many years. Deacon William T. Humphreys was made superintendent on January 11, 1888, and served as such, excepting for a brief interval, until 1926. Mrs. Grace T. Holton has for thirty years served as superintendent of the primary department. The character of their students is their finest memorial.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Two Women's Organizations**

Finally we come to the part in our history of which the women have had the making, i. e., the history of the two women's organizations which have influenced in the past and are influencing in the present the community of Ould Newbury. One organization, now known as the Women's Missionary Society, deals with the educational and spiritual side; the other, known as the Ladies' Benevolent Society, deals with the material and financial needs of the parish. Through the former organization, the community is kept in touch with the outside world, with other communities and other countries, for the Missionary Society endeavors better to understand its neighbors, both in our own and foreign nations. The latter society keeps its nose quite close to the grindstone and in its own back yard, now and then finding time to live up to its aims in deeds for others.

In the year 1819 many ladies in the First Parish in Newbury felt a strong need for devoting a part of their time and talents to the important work of improving themselves and others; so on April 22, a "respectable number" of ladies met at Mrs. Sophia Withington's and agreed to form a society. "The Reverend Leonard Withington was invited to open the meeting with prayer. He accepted the invitation and after withdrew." The ladies then continued with their meeting, choosing Mrs. Sophia Withington as moderator, and Miss Cornelia Sweetser as scribe. It was voted to call the society the Female Reading Society. Among the articles agreed upon and adopted were the following:

"Article 1. The objects of this Society shall be the improvement of the mind and the diffusion of the blessings of civilization and Religion among the heathen of our own country.

"Article 2. Any young lady who will pay annually into the Treasury a sum of not less than twenty-five cents, may become a member of the Society.

"Article 3. The officers of this Society are three Directresses, a Secretary and Treasurer.



"Article 7. All money received by the Treasurer shall be transmitted to the American Board of Commissioners.

"Article 10. A portion of the Scriptures to be read at each meeting, together with books of moral and religious subjects, and to close by singing a hymn.

"Article 11. All conversation shall be excluded when any of the society is reading.

"Article 12. No entertainment to be expected when the Society meets."

The officers elected were:—

Mrs. Sophia Withington,	First Directress
Mrs. Mary Colmah,	Second Directress
Mrs. Phebe Tenney,	Third Directress
Edna Lunt,	Secretary
Abigail Tenny	Treasurer

The early records of the society were beautifully and carefully written; in fact some of the writing really is a work of art.

The Indian Mission School at Brainerd, Arkansas, was adopted by the Reading Society, and for many years barrels of necessities were sent directly to the school.

For eight years the society met without any apparent changes being made in the original constitution. Each meeting was opened with a prayer, usually by Mrs. Withington. At the regular weekly meetings, work was provided that the members might be busy with their hands while listening to the reading. Such articles as socks, stockings, suspenders and mittens were knitted, and muslin collars, cuffs, ruffles, needle books, emery strawberries, night caps, skirts, aprons and cushions were sewed. If any one wished to work for herself, a tax of two cents a meeting was imposed, which was paid over to the treasurer of the society, it being part of the duty of the treasurer to keep a careful record of those who "wrought" for themselves.

The articles made with material owned by the society were either sent directly to the Mission School in the wilderness at Brainerd, or sold in the community to realize money with which to buy sheets, pillow slips, blankets, spreads, combs, needles, slates, waistcoats and such articles as were necessary at the school.

At the eighth annual meeting of the Reading Society, which was held at Mrs. Moody's April 19, 1827, and presided over by Mrs. Colman, a proposal was made to alter the constitution in such a manner as to allow the appropriation of part of the money received for the relief of the poor of this Parish.

Article 1 was to read: "The objects of this Society shall be the improvement of the mind, the diffusion of the blessings of civilization and Religion among the heathen of our own country, and also for the relief of the sick and poor of the Parish."

To the list of the officers was added a visiting committee, their duty being to visit the houses of the poor, to see what aid was required and to bestow what was afforded by the society, and to report their doings at the following meeting. That committee was also made a purchasing committee for the poor.

Until 1844 the Female Reading Society continued with the same objects in view. Many families were aided and at one time a whole family was clothed for a period of time by the society. Money was even given when thought necessary. The visiting committee considered their work not as a duty, but as a privilege, and felt much enriched thereby. The original object of the society was not lost sight of. At one time an appeal from the Greeks in Salem was answered with the same spirit that had characterized the undertakings for the Cherokees. As time went on, the money and supplies available were sent to the Congregational headquarters for home missions in Boston, rather than to the Indian mission, as conditions there were changed.

The twenty-fifth annual meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Edmund Coffin April 25, 1844. By the vote of the ladies present, the object of the charities of the society was changed, as at that time there were no cases of poverty which were not taken care of by other means. It was, therefore, thought expedient that all the contributions be devoted to home missions. It was voted, however, to retain the visiting committee that they might inquire into the wants of the parish, and should they find any urgent case of destitution, the officers were to be notified and a special effort made for its relief.

In the twenty-fifth annual report written by Miss Mary E. Carter, an attempt was made to spur on the work of the society.

For nine years preceding this meeting, there had been a general falling off in the attendance, a gradual diminishing in interest and endeavor, a noticeable decrease in contributions, but little decline in the membership.

At the twenty-fifth annual meeting only fourteen members were present. The original membership had been forty-three, and out of that number only eleven were members at that time. Eleven had "passed away from earth" and the remainder had either moved away from the community or joined the "Benevolent Society in Oldtown."<sup>1</sup> Others had joined, however, so at that time the total membership was forty-seven, but the average attendance at the meetings was only four or five and the total amount received in the treasury during the year only about seventeen dollars, contrasted with an average yearly contribution of about thirty dollars during the early years of the society. It was stated that about two-thirds of this money was the result of the ladies' industry. In spite of everything, a box valued at twenty-two dollars had been forwarded for the Cherokee Mission in Arkansas, besides twenty dollars for Rev. Mr. Worcester at the Mission.

Miss Carter ended her report with a short sermon which the author feels would not be inappropriate here: "Weary not in well doing, spend no more time in idle words of penitence, but shake off sloth and indifference—strive continually for higher, nobler effort, for true benevolence of thought and action—and thus commence that life here, which is the spirit's life, that endeth not, where the material bodily powers by which we here express our benevolence, shall all perish and moulder to the dust again. Oh! may we hear aright, all warning voices within and around us, and hereafter more truly live."

For a period, the society increased its interests and work very slowly, but according to the annual report of 1854 it had made a decided advance. By 1861 the Reading Society was again able to collect thirty dollars annually as during the first eight years, and once again the interest was high. Although there had been a lack

<sup>1</sup> The "Benevolent Society in Oldtown" refers to an emanation of this society which was founded in 1832 by Mrs. Paul Hsley, formerly Miss Mary Moody, for the convenience of the women in the vicinity of the Lower Green. It was first called the Female Reading Society of Parker Plains, and was later known as the Female Reading Society of Parker River Village.

of interest for a while, there is nothing in the reports that tells of any unpleasantness. The following extract from the forty-third report written by E. Coffin proves this. "Amid all the turmoil and contention of the past year, with war desolating our beloved country, and faction and party strife disturbing our parishes and school districts, from the highest organization to the lowest, everything in commotion, our little society holds on its wonted course. It is pleasant to see one little band where no note of discord is ever heard, when with one heart and one mind each can labor for so good a cause as Home Missions."

In addition to the work done for home missions, much was done for the suffering soldiers during the Civil War. Even during that time the amount collected for the Congregational Home Missionary Society far exceeded previous years.

In 1864 the name of the Reading Society was changed to read "Ladies' Home Missionary Society." The membership at the fiftieth anniversary had reached eighty-three, the largest number since the society was formed. In 1896 the names of the officers were changed. In place of first and second directress, president and vice president appeared and one person was given the double duty of being secretary and treasurer. The office of third directress was dropped, but that of collector remained. Mrs. Francis Sanborn was made the first president, as she had been first directress since the office had been vacated by Mrs. Omar White Folsom, except for one intervening year in which Mrs. S. William Little served in that capacity. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Little also served the society as second or third directress and later as vice president, for sixty-three years.

According to the custom, upon Mrs. Sanborn's resignation, Mrs. C. S. Holton was chosen president in 1897 and continued until 1923. The meeting at which the one hundredth anniversary of the organization was observed, was saddened by the remembrance of the death of Miss Addie M. B. Little who had served the organization faithfully as secretary and treasurer.

About this time the name of the organization seems to have been changed to "Women's Home Missionary Society," in place of "Ladies' Home Missionary Society." During this period the organization was rather inactive, but at the annual meeting of 1921, a motion was

made by Mrs. Richard T. Noyes to hold a meeting every other month to see if the activities could not be enlarged. Evidently at this time also it was agreed to drop "Home" from the name of the organization that the whole world might be included. At this meeting tea was served by the hostess, Mrs. C. S. Holton. This was the first time refreshments had been served in the history of the society.

At the annual meeting in 1923 new officers were chosen. Mrs. Jere B. Lunt was elected president. It was voted to confine the work for the year to Strait College in New Orleans.

Following the idea which had prompted the forming of the Reading Society in the Parker River district in 1832, the society voted to hold three meetings on the same day, one in the Upper Green district, another in the Lower Green section, and a third in the center of the parish. These were called missionary teas. Although this custom was not continued, it seemed to be the necessary spur, for from then on, the attendance and the enthusiasm were quite gratifying.

Several other changes which have remained were made at the time. Outside speakers were occasionally heard at the meetings. The first speaker on record was Mrs. Henry Bailey Little, who had returned from a Mediterranean trip and a visit to the Holy Land.

Mrs. William Dole was the first representative sent from the society as a delegate to the Woman's Board of Missions of the Essex North Congregational Society, which held its meeting in Amesbury October 14, 1924.

In addition to helping Strait College, money was sent for music in the mission school at Athens, Greece; boxes were sent to Rev. Edward P. Holton, a missionary in India, and cards sent at Christmas time to shut-in members and to missionaries in Greece and India.

In 1925, with Miss Harriet Ilsley as president and Miss Eliza A. Little in charge of the literary program, it was decided to study one book through the year, and *Looking Ahead with Latin America* was chosen. While the chapters were ably read by individual members, the rest sewed busily on work for the Health Center, articles for use in the Homeopathic Hospital, or dish towels and table cloths for the Old Ladies' Home. After finishing this book it was decided to select disconnected readings as it was hard to carry on the thought over a period of two months. The following year a

few chapters from *Moslem Women* and *Young Islam on Trek* were read. The hand work continued in the form of layettes for the Red Cross, and a quilt which was later sold. To supplement the proceeds thus received, a cake sale was held at Pearson's Flower Shop, and with the money realized plus that received from the thank offering and dues, Miss Hammaker in India, Bricks College in North Carolina, a mission in Angola, Africa, Knox Institute and the treasury of the church were remembered.

Since 1930 Miss Eliza A. Little has been the president of the society. During recent years the hand work, which had begun to decline, has disappeared entirely and the efforts have become more intellectual. Although at first reluctant, many members have developed a willingness to participate actively in the program by writing a paper, giving a survey of a chapter, or a report of a meeting visited. The president has brought to our attention current topics: problems of our country, international relationships, including the League of Nations, reduction of armaments and the World Court, as well as thoughts from modern authors on religion and moral living. For one year Miss Harriot Colman presented current events at each meeting. One theme suggested by an interdenominational association and chosen by the society, has been studied throughout the year, sometimes from one book, but more often with the help of additional reference books. Among the subjects chosen have been "The American Indian," "Christ and the Modern World," and "Japan." The payments to the treasurer of the church have increased twenty-five per cent; the gifts and donations to Miss Hammaker and Tougaloo College have remained about the same. Contributions of clothing and household articles have been small, so that distributions in the community are impossible and boxes for missionaries, few.

One cannot help but compare the meetings of the latter years with those of the first, and wonder how the original founders would feel about the program, refreshments, and the entertainment sometimes provided (Article 12) and the change in the object of the society to include foreign missions (Article 1), how they would marvel at the ease with which delegates can be sent to and from our society, the union meetings, the wealth of material which can be procured for the enlightenment of its members, and perhaps even

at the continuance of a society formed so many years ago. Although its present activities differ from those of an earlier day, the society still performs a valuable service by stimulating an interest in the community and in the world at large.

The society known as the Ladies' Benevolent Society originated in 1852. At that time Mrs. George Little awakened an interest in the members of the First Parish of Newbury, in the purchase of a new carpet for the church. The collecting of the money, the making and laying of the carpet stimulated a community interest and as other things were needed, it was suggested a society be formed to work and earn money.

"Tuesday afternoon, May 10, 1852, the ladies of the First Parish of Newbury met in the old vestry to form a society of mutual benefit, improvement and social enjoyment. The room was full, all were interested, and the result of the meeting was the formation of a society called the 'Parish Circle,' consisting of one hundred and sixty-four ladies and fifty-five gentlemen."<sup>2</sup> It was voted to meet once in a fortnight at seven o'clock. The officers were to be a president, two vice presidents, secretary, treasurer and seven managers. The following officers were chosen:—President, Mrs. Caroline Withington; Vice Presidents, Miss Elizabeth Coffin, Mrs. Joseph Little; Managers, Miss Matilda Plummer, Mrs. Horace P. Noyes, Mrs. George Little, Mrs. Daniel Lancaster, Miss Mary Noyes, Mrs. Frederic Knight, Mrs. Joseph Felch.

The Parish Circle continued its good work immediately after its inception by raising money to the amount of one hundred dollars to supply lamps for the church and vestry. Soon after the society was formed the suggestion was made to hold a fair, a novel idea in Oldtown. The only person who had had experience was Mrs. Little, who had been active for years in the Greek Fair in Newburyport. The plan to hold a fair became very popular. The time set was the Fourth of July, and already it was the middle of May, leaving barely six weeks in which to make preparations. Many garments were made, fancy and useful articles were contributed, quantities of eatables were promised, and these promises were abundantly fulfilled.

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<sup>2</sup> Copied from the record of the thirty-fifth anniversary.

The question then came up as to where the fair should be held. The old vestry which stood midway between the Newbury High School building (the present vestry) and the meetinghouse was not suitable, as it was of one story and not large. Someone proposed holding the fair in the vacant high school building if permission could be procured. The thought dawned on the managers of the Parish Circle that they might get a permanent foothold therein. The selectmen had power to sell either story of this building separately for five hundred dollars. The Circle were without funds, but they considered their prospects were favorable for making a "goodly" sum at the coming fair. There was great need of moving cautiously, however, as some residents of the town were determined that this structure should be sold and moved away. As permission had been obtained for the use of the building for the fair, preparations were being made in the lower story.

A meeting with the town fathers had been arranged at which a committee with Mrs. N. N. Withington as chairman was to represent the Circle. At that time Mrs. Withington was the youngest member of the executive board. However, as she had near connections who were competent to give all legal advice needed, the other two members deferred to her. Two of the selectmen were from Oldtown, only one of whom, Ebenezer Little, could be relied upon as a friend. The chairman, Captain Richard Adams, was not a person who courted popularity among the neighboring community, and his kinsmen of the Adams family at the Farms were the strongest of advocates for the sale and removal of the building. The man who represented South Byfield, Calvin Noyes, was of course reckoned as an opponent as was every one in that district.

On Tuesday, July 1, 1852, Mrs. Withington went with Miss Matilda Plummer to Market Square and called on two of the parishioners of the First Parish at their places of business, Mr. Edmund Knight and Mr. Washington Adams. They stated their case and asked the men to endorse notes so that they could secure the deed for the lower story of the high school building the following day. They consented, Mr. Adams giving his name for over three hundred dollars and Mr. Knight for the residue. The notes were at the Ocean Bank, so Mrs. Withington and Miss Plummer went thither. The cashier, Jacob Stone, paid them in gold as they requested. (It



was in the days of state banks and the way might have been blocked if they had offered bills).

It was a very warm day and already past noon. They looked for some kind of a team to carry them to Oldtown, but nothing was in sight; so they went on foot carrying their bag of gold. On arriving at Dr. Withington's they placed the gold in his care and it was safely kept in his "bed chamber" over night.

The next afternoon the committee appeared before the town officials. Captain Adams, as chairman, made quite a speech, and though he had had misgivings, he at last agreed to sign a deed. The gold was paid down, and the deed for the lower hall given in trust to Mrs. Caroline Withington, Mrs. Sarah J. Alter, Mrs. Maria J. Little, Miss Matilda Plummer and Mrs. E. L. Withington.

Although the committee were then in possession, they did not feel confident of their success, but still feared some mishap. Some malicious person might set fire to the building, especially as all the valuables collected for the fair were stored there. That night it was watched by some male friend, and the next day, which was Sunday, the minds of many were more on the safety of their goods than on the service at the house of worship near-by.

Monday morning came at last and all was well. The weather was perfect. People came from every direction and the house was thronged. There was no other celebration in town; so the crowd sought the fair. The hall looked fine. It was encircled with tables bountifully and attractively laden. Many were the exclamations from visitors, "All this in six weeks!" Besides the local contributions, dealers in town had offered goods to be sold at a price that the society might benefit thereby. The home-made articles of needle-work made a good showing and the cake table groaned beneath a load of delicious eatables, for which Oldtown housewives have always been noted.

Among those who came were the wife and seven children of one of the strongest advocates for the sale and removal of the high school building, a returned Californian with his wife and two little daughters, and Mr. Charles Wills just returned from Calcutta with his wife and family, who generously patronized the tables.

The fair was open all Independence Day and evening and the two following evenings until nearly midnight. The results were

very satisfactory, as the net proceeds amounted to four hundred dollars.

Mrs. Withington was appointed to pay Mr. Adams who had endorsed the larger sum, and before long Mr. Knight was also paid. Soon afterwards there was much discussion about naming the building. Parker Street had previously been named in honor of the first minister of the parish; so it was finally deemed appropriate to name the new acquisition after him also.

For three years the society functioned under the name of the Parish Circle. Many enjoyable meetings were held and much good was accomplished. The total amount spent for the improvement of the parish amounted to \$1294.09. Nearly all of this was raised by the ladies. The meetinghouse had been supplied with blinds and a sofa bought for the pulpit. In addition, Mr. Withington's pew had been upholstered and improvements made in Parker Hall.

It would seem that these additions and changes were thought unnecessary and extravagant by the men, and this evidently caused an ill feeling between the men and the women of the Circle. On May 16, 1855, therefore, the Parish Circle was reorganized under the name of the Ladies' Social Circle. Rules were adopted that good order should be preserved at the meetings, and those who were unwilling to conform to them could not be considered members.

After the old vestry had been sold and removed to South Green Street, now known as Rolfe's Lane, many religious meetings were held in the lower story of Parker Hall, commonly spoken of as the lecture room. This interfered with the plans of the Circle and so it was decided to purchase the upper story that they might have a hall to do with as they saw fit. On February 4, 1856, Mr. Daniel Lunt sold the remainder of the building to the Ladies' Circle for four hundred dollars. "This sum was paid without any pecuniary aid from the gentlemen. A portion of the money was borrowed from various women, and raised and paid back by the members of the society. They would have declined any pecuniary aid had it been proffered, preferring to feel that they had by their own efforts and exertions paid the debt they had contracted."

At the following meeting held March 10 it was voted that the "Lecture Room should be let for no purpose" but that the hall could be let for any moral use—and a committee of three ladies were chosen to have the control of the hall for three years.

On May 30, 1856, an act was passed by the General Court and approved by Governor Gardner making "Caroline Withington, Maria J. Little, Eliza F. Noyes, Edna M. Woodman, Lucy Coffin, Ann K. Lunt, their associates and successors, a corporation known by the name of the Ladies' Benevolent Society of Newbury, for the purpose of taking, holding, investing and distributing such funds as they may have, or may hereafter be given them for the charitable and benevolent objects of their association; with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all the duties, liabilities and restrictions set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes." The passing of this Act gave the corporation the power to establish rules and regulations for the management of the association by a majority vote, and the power to hold real and personal estate to an amount not exceeding ten thousand dollars.

After the passage of the Act, the ladies wished to purchase the land on which the vestry stood. Dr. Leonard Withington, the owner of the land, had allowed the Town of Newbury to build a high school upon it with the understanding that the building be used only for "religious, educational or scientific purposes." When the ladies came to buy the land from Dr. Withington, a similar restrictive clause was inserted in the deed providing that if the premises ceased to be used for the purpose above named, the land should revert to Dr. Withington and his heirs, "without any process of law in the same manner as though this instrument had never been executed." The deed was given on November 23, 1861, in consideration of one thousand dollars.<sup>3</sup>

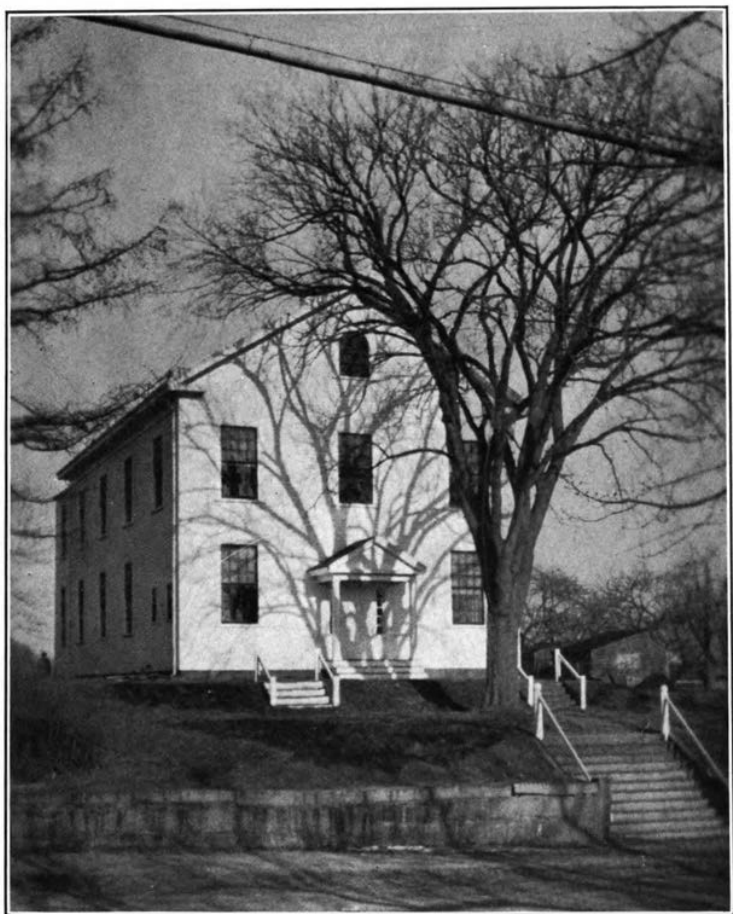
In the afternoon of June 25, 1856, the ladies reorganized as the Ladies' Benevolent Society.

At the annual meeting May 8, 1861, Mrs. John R. Thurston was chosen to take the place of Mrs. Caroline Withington, who had been president since the formation of the society.

During the Civil War many garments were made by the society, and bandages and boxes of lint prepared and sent to the Sanitary Commission. Many barrels of onions were peeled and sent off, causing many tears to flow. Articles of clothing, books, wines, and cider were also sent to the sick and needy soldiers.

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<sup>3</sup> At present, 1935, steps are being taken to clear the title if possible.



PARKER HALL



In May, 1868, after the burning of the church, Mrs. George Little was chosen as president of the society. At that time the chief executive was chosen for life, and it was the will of everyone that Mrs. Little hold that office until death, but after ten years she wished to be released because of her health.

True to the motive which caused the formation of the society, the ladies were always ready to supply the material demands of the church, a carpet here, steps and railing there, and paint wherever needed, so that when the parish was in need of funds to replace the church destroyed in January, 1868, the society was ready to work for the cause. Accordingly, much stress was put on the fair which had become an annual event and has been continued even up to the present, 1935. A paper dated July 4, 1868, and called "The Oldtown Mercury" was put into circulation the last of June. It was published to create an interest in the two-day fair which was to be held the third and fourth of July, and sold for five cents a copy to increase the receipts of the event. The cost of publishing was defrayed by the advertisements of local business firms, firms of Boston, Waltham and even New York. Of the eighteen New York firms, sixteen were located on Maiden Lane and much credit must go to one who felt inspired to work for a cause in a small town so far away. Mr. William Stevens must have felt repaid for the cost of his advertisement when he was selected to furnish an organ for the new church the following year.

On July 3, at two o'clock the doors of Parker Hall were opened to the public. Both stories were used for the sale. On the lower floor articles of home manufacture including braided mats, rugs, and stair carpet were found. Here too one was induced to make arrangements for supper, and dinner the following day. Upstairs many more articles were displayed for sale. Among them were ladies', misses', and children's underclothing in different styles, aprons, plain and fancy, children's gored dresses, cushions, mats, toilet sets, perfumery, toys and pictures. There were also strawberries, confectionery, creams and cake in abundance for all who desired them.

With the money thus obtained together with other accumulated funds, an organ was purchased for the new church on March 26, 1869. The organ cost \$3200 and was paid for in three installments.

The society maintained the upkeep, including repairs, tuning and insurance, until 1924, when they presented it to the proprietors of the meetinghouse. Their interest did not cease at this point, however, because the following year an electric motor was added which made the gift of more service to the church.

In this way the Ladies' Benevolent Society has continued to supply the parish whenever and wherever the need arises, many times with gifts of money and hours of service. It has also allowed the use of its building for meetings of the various church organizations and even for church services at times. It has taken unto itself the responsibility of doing whatever has been overlooked by the other organizations. The society has, however, made its work enjoyable. Many happy hours have been spent, whether in cleaning the church, serving a dinner or having a party, whether sewing for the hospital, for the Red Cross or for its own financial benefit.

The upkeep of Parker Hall has been a great expense. Some help has been received from the parish through the yearly supply of coal. Occasionally some assistance has been obtained from the town and Grange in return for the use of the building.

Skipping over the years and arriving at the year 1921, let us consider the treasurer's report from that date to the spring of 1934, and see what the figures tell. We find that during this period the society has given the proprietors for renovating and beautifying the church and grounds at least \$2670. To the church treasurer has been given over \$233 to be used toward the church apportionment for missions. For the repairs on Parker Hall about \$2000 has been spent in addition to the output for the necessary running expenses of the building. Adding to this the usual Christmas gifts and the answers to appeals, the society has averaged in the thirteen years an annual expenditure of over four hundred dollars.

Early in the morning of May 12, 1934, Parker Hall was greatly damaged by fire of unknown origin. To the casual observer the building looked little damaged. This deceiving appearance was one of the causes for the differences in opinion which arose. It seemed to many that the building could be restored to its original condition at little cost. To many this meant preserving the architecture of the building which had become a landmark. The owners, however, had various opinions of their own and wished for a more

useful building, a place where more money could be earned with much more ease and pleasure. They also wanted a banquet hall more accessible to the older people of the parish and an auditorium with a stage.

The requirements of the state interfered with all opinions. The building could not be rebuilt as before because of state regulations. A plan was finally decided upon which reversed the uses of the two stories, placing the banquet hall and kitchen on the first floor. An addition was to be made at the rear, thereby adding a stage to the upper hall and much needed room to the banquet hall below. After the plans were blue-printed and accepted by the state, the restoration and remodelling of Parker Hall was at last begun under the charge of Deacon Hall J. Leigh in the summer of 1934.

At the present time, the spring of 1935, Parker Hall is nearly restored at the approximate cost of \$6350. The members of the Ladies' Benevolent Society are planning many activities and with their modernized equipment, are hoping soon to erase their debt so that they will again be financially able to meet the demands of the parish.





## DEACONS OF THE FIRST CHURCH, NEWBURY

*Chosen*

Richard Knight .....	
Nicholas Noyes .....	March 20, 1684
Robert Long .....	March 20, 1684
Tristram Coffin .....	March 20, 1684
William Noyes .....	Prior to 1693
Cutting Noyes .....	
Nathaniel Coffin .....	Prior to 1709
Stephen Jaques, Jr. ....	October, 1725
Joshua Moody .....	October, 1725
Samuel Moody .....	October 13, 1730
James Noyes .....	October 13, 1730
Daniel Knight .....	January 7, 1747
Joseph Morse .....	January 7, 1747
Daniel Hale .....	November 19, 1766
Silas Pearson .....	October 18, 1769
Nathaniel Little, Jr. ....	March 4, 1804
Ezra Hale .....	March 4, 1804
Jeremiah Colman .....	May 5, 1834
Ezra Hale, Jr. ....	March 12, 1846
Nathaniel Little .....	March 12, 1846
Joseph Little .....	March 12, 1846
George P. Danforth .....	March 21, 1855
Stephen W. Little .....	April 27, 1866
George F. Little .....	December 4, 1874
Edward Perkins .....	April 13, 1876
Frank O. Woods .....	April 8, 1886
John C. Rolfe .....	April 6, 1893
*Hall J. Leigh .....	January 27, 1909
*Edwin Hsley .....	January 28, 1920
William T. Humphreys .....	January 25, 1922
David Little .....	May 28, 1924
*William Hsley .....	May 27, 1925
*Hallet W. Noyes .....	March 30, 1935

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\*Deacons, 1935.



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